



Health and Social Services
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Memorandum

Date: March 10, 2021

To: Shehnaz Ali
Assistant Deputy Minister, Social Services Branch

From: Geraldine MacDonald
Director, Family and Children's Services, Social Services Branch

Subject: Report From George Savoury: Review of Placement Decision Making With Yukon Family and Children's Services

Please find attached the above captioned report from George Savoury.

This final report incorporates the recommendations put forth by Family and Children's Services (FCS) on the draft report, and completes phase one of the external review of Placement Services. The recommendations within the report will be further analysed.

All accepted recommendations, that align appropriately with the broader Caregiver Strategy being undertaken by FCS with First Nations and CYFN, will be actioned under this strategy.

Geraldine MacDonald
Director, Family and Children's Services
Social Services Branch

(Attach) 1

**PLACEMENT DECISION MAKING,
YUKON FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S
SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
FEBRUARY 10, 2021**

George Savoury, MSW, RSW

SAVOURY CONSULTING LTD., www.savouryconsulting.com

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Savoury Consulting Ltd. was engaged in September 2020 to do a review of placement decision making for Family and Children's Services, Health and Social Services, Yukon, Canada. A specific focus of the review was on policies and decision-making processes utilized, when there is an allegation of or substantiated sexual abuse by a foster child residing within the foster home. The aim of this review is to improve placement services and decision making for staff responsible for making placement decisions. The review included an examination of:

1. The professional training and clinical supervision of social workers making placement decisions.
2. The training and supervision of foster parents when there are allegations of abuse against foster children placed in their care.
3. Issues with policies, practices and standards that may negatively impact placement decisions.
4. The technology and record keeping mechanisms used and its impact on alerting social workers and supervisors to placement issues or concerns prior to making placement decisions.
5. Jurisdictional scan of practices in other provinces and territories with regards to this area of practice
6. Recommendations on enhancement of current policies, processes and procedures if deemed necessary from the review.

National-level reports, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's final report (Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future), the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the enactment of Canada's Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis Children, Youth and Families (January, 2021), have resulted in significant changes in child welfare in Canada, particularly for First Nations, Inuit and Metis children, youth and families. The Yukon government has made a number of significant changes as a result of these reports/initiatives and a desire to enhance services for children, youth and families. Yukon Family and Children's Services, has partnered with Yukon First Nations, including the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN), on the following systemic initiatives:

1. Implementation of the recommendations from the review of the Child and Family Services Act
2. A significant preventive initiative is the Extended Family Care program, which ensures that children who require out-of-home care remain with their families. Yukon was the first jurisdiction in Canada to match the supports and services for extended family caregivers to those provided to foster caregivers. There was also a re-alignment of staff positions to create the Placement Resource Unit, for the purpose of providing dedicated support workers and supports for all caregivers, including foster caregivers, extended family caregivers, and adoptive parents.
3. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's first Call to Action asks that all levels of government commit to reducing the number of Indigenous children in care. "Yukon continues to make significant strides toward reconciliation through strong government-to-government relationships. The department recognizes that to create change, a number of organizational changes were made over the last two years to support our shift in child welfare practice. These include: realigning Regional Services under the director; creating Family Enhancement teams; creating the Family Resource unit; co-locating a new team with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation; creating a team of analysts to review policies and procedures in partnership with CYFN; and creating barrier-free universal access to family programming. The Department also implemented Nts' äw Chua, a new supportive housing and semi-

independent living program for youth. In addition, through the partnership with First Nations and CYFN, the Department embarked on a significant, innovative initiative called Honouring Connections. Through this initiative, all existing continuing custody orders are being reviewed with First Nations and CYFN (where applicable) to determine if the children and youth in the director's care can be reunified with family, extended family, community, and culture." (Yukon Child and Family Services Act 2017-19 Annual Report, pp. 1-3)

The Department has a very professional and dedicated professional staff, reasonable caseload/workloads and a very collaborative approach to working with families, other Departments, community agencies and in particular with First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations.

This review of placement services provides an excellent opportunity to address issues and concerns that have been identified and to improve and strengthen placement services.

The results of this review revealed that staff consider the following areas in the most positive manner: Culturally safe principles and practices; standards and policies for ensuring that documentation takes place within 24 hours of a foster home where a foster child who is the subject of allegations of sexual abuse against another foster child is present in a foster home; the policy for placing a foster home on hold; and safety for staff and clients.

The results of this review that staff consider to be of most concern are: communication between staff and management regarding placement decisions and the lack of technology to enable social workers to easily access which foster homes are on hold and the reason(s) for the action.

There are no perfect child welfare systems, however the various initiatives that Yukon's Family and Children's Services have implemented reflects a commitment to creating the best possible system for children, youth and families. This review is part of that process. The reality is that there is always risk associated with decision-making in child welfare. Removing children from a family to prevent harm involves risk and choosing to leave a child in a family or placement resource where it's been determined the child can be safe from harm (even with services), involves risk. Responsive organizations must continually examine systems issues and identify changes required. In addition, there is an obligation and onus for staff at all levels to learn from mistakes. Despite the best risk management tools, clear policies and standards, adequate workloads and clinical judgements, the risk and uncertainty associated with decision making in child welfare cannot be eliminated. By constantly examining the outcomes for children, youth and families, improvements can be made and risks can be reduced.

This report has 70 recommendations, which focus on such areas as training for foster parents on culturally safe principles and practices, strengthening of placement policies to prevent sexual abuse, creation of a caseload/workload standard, training in clinical supervision, increased training and support for foster parents, expanded placement options, enhanced record keeping regarding placements, wellness and safety for staff and improved communication and organizational structure.

In completing this review, excellent support was received at all levels, from Geri MacDonald, Director of Family and Children's Services to the front-line staff. All documents required to complete this review were made available. Staff at every level were open, honest and willing to share their insights on the systematic challenges and solutions required to improve placement services in the Yukon. The level of professionalism, dedication and commitment of staff providing child welfare services is excellent. They deserve recognition and support for doing an incredibly difficult job. The fact that 100 % of the staff involved in this review completed the survey is indicative of their commitment to their work and strong

desire to see positive changes take place. The implementation of the recommendations (Appendix 1) in this report, along with the initiatives taken over the past several years will better enable social workers and management to make the best possible placement decisions for children and youth in the Yukon.

2. INTRODUCTION

Located in the northwest region of Canada, the Yukon is bordered by Alaska to the west, the Northwest Territories to the east, the Beaufort Sea to the north, and British Columbia to the south. Yukon covers 482,443 km², of which 474,391 km² is land and 8,052 km² is water, making it the forty-first largest subnational entity in the world, and among the fifty largest, the least populous.

According to the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, “the estimated population of the territory on June 2020 was 42,230. The majority of the population (33, 033) resided in the Whitehorse area. Yukon’s Indigenous population, including those with status under the Indian Act and those who self-identified as First Nations, Métis or Inuit, amounted to 8,591 or 20.3% of the total population. This represents an increase in the Indigenous population by 823, from 7,768 in 2010 to 8,591 in 2020. However, more than 70% of the children, youth and families involved in the child welfare system self-identify as First Nation, Métis or Inuit.

Approximately 4,867 (56.7%) of the Indigenous population resided in Whitehorse and 3,724 (43.3%) resided in rural communities.” (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, Government of the Yukon, June 2020).

Child welfare services are mandated under Yukon's Child and Family Services Act (2010). The Act is very progressive and has many of the features of Canada's Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis Children, Youth and Families. The Act requires that it be reviewed every five years (section 183), and work is now underway on a review of the Act. The Act at the outset, in its preamble, references the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

“The importance of children and young people’s safety and welfare is manifested in the development of a human rights instrument specifically for children and young people, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a child-centred framework within which services to children are located. It spells out the basic human rights that all children have, including the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influence, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. The four core principles of the convention are: non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child. The vision of children implicit in the CRC is that they are neither the property of their parents nor are they helpless objects of charity. Children are individuals, members of a family and a community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to their age and stage of development.” (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, September, 1990).

Section 165 of the Yukon CFSA as part of the responsibilities of the Minister in part 7, provides the authority related to facilities and services for children. Section 165 stipulates that “children who are in the care or custody of a director, that the Minister may establish, operate and provide residential facilities for one or more children including foster homes, group homes, residential centres or receiving homes.” (Yukon CFSA, s.165 (1).

The Yukon CFSA is very progressive in emphasizing the importance of placement with the child's extended family whenever possible. Section 89(2) spells out the same type of criteria as is found in

Canada's Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis Children, Youth and Families when determining the placement for a child taken into the care or custody of the director.

89 (1) A child in the care or custody of a director may only be placed by the director with a caregiver in a residential facility established by, or operated on behalf of the Minister under section 165.

(2) In determining the placement for the child as part of the case plan developed under section 44, priority shall be given to placing the child with a member of the child's extended family, or if that is not consistent with the best interests of the child, priority shall be given to placing the child as follows:

(a) in a location where the child can maintain contact with friends and members of the child's extended family; and

(b) in a location that will allow the child to continue in the same school.

(3) If the child is a member of a First Nation, in determining the placement for the child as part of the case plan developed under section 44, priority shall be given to placing the child as follows

(a) with a member of the child's extended family;

(b) with a family that includes a person who is a member of the child's First Nation; or

(c) with a family that includes a person who is a member of another First Nation.

(4) If placement of the child who is a member of a First Nation in accordance with paragraphs (3)(a), (b) or (c) is not consistent with the best interests of the child, priority shall be given to placing the child in accordance with paragraphs (2)(a) and (b). S.Y. 2008, c.1, s.89

The Yukon government is obligated to provide the Minister with the resources to enable the Minister and its employees to carry out the legislative provisions of the Act. The Act is not discretionary legislation. Child protection is no different than essential police or health care services.

The Department of Health and Social Services' (HSS), Family and Children's Services (FCS) branch provides child welfare services to Yukoners under the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA). (See Organizational Charts - Appendix 2). To ensure that the CFSA is applied consistently across the territory and so that children, youth and families received support services according to the same standards regardless of whether they lived in a rural community or Whitehorse, in October 2018, HSS realigned Regional Services under the director of FCS (referred to as the "director"). (Yukon Child and Family Services Act 2017-19 Annual Report, April 2020, p.9).

The Yukon, like other jurisdictions has focused considerable efforts on providing preventive services so children and youth can remain safely with their families. Unfortunately, children and youth at times have to be placed outside their parental home. Such decisions while necessary at times can be painful and traumatic for children and very difficult for parent(s). "One example of another type of parental loss is when outside agencies intervene to take children from their homes because of parental abuse, neglect, and maltreatment. These children often find themselves moving from one foster home to the next with no real sense of stability. In addition to the immense stress of parental loss, these children often face severe chronic stressors such as physical or sexual abuse, parental psychopathology, parental substance abuse, parental criminality, and poverty." (Schneider & Phares, 2005, p.820.).

"Keeping children with family also allows them to remain in the same school and community with consistent access to teachers, neighbors, extended kin, friends, faith groups, coaches, sports teams and others that can provide critical support for children's sound mental and emotional health." (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2014).

Yukon's Child and Family Services Act 2017-19 Annual Report provides an excellent overview of the progressive work done to improve placement services, including keeping children within their own communities. These initiatives include the following:

- Preventing children from coming into care through prevention services including wraparound supports to meet the needs of children and youth.
- Utilizing section 14 of the CFSA, which enables Extended Family Care Agreement (EFCAs), the Yukon in November 2017 was the first jurisdiction in Canada to increase financial supports to extended family caregivers to match the funding levels foster caregivers receive.
- In September 2019, Yukon Family and Children's Services created the Placement Resource Unit to provide dedicated support workers for both caregivers and extended family caregivers.

Source: Yukon's Child and Family Services Act 2017-19 Annual Report

“Based on the CFSA, we have developed an extensive continuum of support and services for families. Preventing children and youth from entering into the care is the starting point for this continuum. When families need help to keep children safe at home, we make every effort to keep them together with wraparound supports tailored to their needs. While the number of children and youth in care/or custody of the director has decreased from 141 in September 2017 to 79 in September 2020, the rising number of children in Extended Family Care indicates that the overall number of children and youth requiring out-of-home-care due to safety concerns has not significantly decreased. Child welfare concerns rooted in complex social issues such as intergenerational trauma, poverty, parental substance use, mental wellness and/or family violence cannot be resolved by the CFSA alone. However, we are pleased that the system is responding in better ways through the Extended Family Care program, as described above, to keep children and youth closer to their families, communities and culture.

When this is not possible, and all other options have been exhausted, the second part of our continuum responds with out-of-home care options for children and youth, such as extended family care, foster care and group care. The third part of our continuum provides programs and services to youth and young adults involved with FCS to achieve their life goals as they transition out of the child welfare system. This section of Yukon's Family and Children's Annual Report provides a detailed account of these three distinct parts of our continuum.

Extended family care

If a child is in need of out-of-home care, our first choice is for the child to reside with their extended family. Supported and mandated through the CFSA, specifically s. 14, Extended Family Care Agreements (EFCAs) allow children who require out-of-home care to remain with extended family rather than come into the care and/or custody of the director. Extended family caregivers include people who are related to the child by blood, through a spousal relationship, or any other persons who have, or had, a parent-like relationship with the child.

In November 2017, we were the first jurisdiction in Canada to increase financial supports provided to extended family caregivers to match the funding levels foster caregivers received. Then, in October 2018, we clarified policies and processes to ensure that all children in out-of-home care, regardless of whether they are in foster care or in extended family care, receive equivalent supports and services. The number of children in the Extended Family Care program in September in 2017 was 54, compared to 146 children in September 2020.

Foster care program

Once all options for extended family care are exhausted, we then, in collaboration with parents and other partners such as the child's respective First Nation, explore alternative options for out-of-home care. The preferred approach for out-of-home care is a family environment where the child can continue to receive

support to reach their developmental milestones and maintain connections to their family, culture and community. The foster care program strives to provide this with trained foster caregivers who work with the child, the child's parents and FCS.

A noteworthy trend in our data is the decrease in the number of children in the foster care program from 70 in September 2017 to 50 in September 2020, which coincides with the increase in the number of children in the extended family care program, which was noted above.

Placement Resource Unit

In September 2019, we re-aligned staffing positions to create the Placement Resource Unit and provide dedicated support workers for both foster caregivers and extended family caregivers.

These policy, procedural and program changes were implemented as a response to the growing number of families accessing the extended family care program, as well as to reduce barriers and encourage more extended family members to provide out-of-home care. (Yukon Child and Family Services Act Annual Report, April 2020, pp. 10&17-19)."

While the placement of children in out of home care is the focus of this review, all of the initiatives that are underway and referenced in the executive section are inextricably linked to improving the quality of life for children involved in the child welfare system. Improving child safety and well-being in foster and relative placements requires a comprehensive approach. A comprehensive approach has key steps and decision points, which have been described as follows:

"Critical decision points include:

- (a) recruitment;
- (b) screening, assessment, and licensing;
- (c) matching the child and care provider;
- (d) ongoing foster home monitoring and support; and
- (e) special investigations of concerns in the foster homes.

Key steps include the need to:

1. Identify risk factors for maltreatment in foster care by automatically generating a flag in the case management system if one or more factors are present so that workers can create a safety and support plan.
2. For any new child placement, complete an ecomap with the child (age-permitting) and care providers to help identify sources of support.
3. Consider offering specialized foster parent training and ongoing coaching.
4. Engage providers in specialized individualized support and/or support groups." (NNND, MDHHS, Casey Family Programs, June 2015).

These steps and decisions points are all aimed at making the placement for the child as successful as possible. The success of the placement has a number of factors that must be taken into account. "The success of the placement approach and the related clinical supervision is defined not by the child's return to his or her natural family (this goal may sometimes be impossible to achieve) but by the re-establishment of healthy relations between the young person and his or her birth family or network of significant persons. Success is also demonstrated when young people develop the ability to engage in a effective academic learning process in line with their potential; when their adaptive functioning is improved; when they demonstrate better capacity for self-regulation and a behavioural profile appropriate to their level of development; when they are able to develop a healthier attachment capacity; when they feel sufficiently

safe to go back to achieving their developmental milestones (language, independence, motor skills, socialization, etc.) and so forth.” (Clinical Supervision Model for Children/Youth with Complex Needs, Acadian Peninsula, New Brunswick, 2018, p.8).

This review provides 70 recommendations for Family and Children's Services to improve child safety and well-being in foster care and to reduce the potential for children to be maltreated in foster care. A request was made to the provincial/territorial lead for a jurisdictional scan of practices related to this area in other provinces and territories, however the response to this request had not been received at time of completion of this report.

The 70 recommendations (Appendix 1 – List of Recommendations) in this review focus on improvements in the following areas:

1. Culturally Safe Principles and Practices
2. Placement Policies, Program and Standards
3. Caseload/Workload
4. Clinical Supervision
5. Professional Training and Development
6. Training and Support for Foster Parents
7. Adequacy of Placement Options
8. Standards and Policies for Documentation
9. Technology Available for Social Workers and Supervisors
10. Standards and Policies for Placing a Foster Home on Hold
11. Standards and Guidelines for Record Keeping Regarding Placement Decisions
12. Safety for Staff and Clients
13. Communication Processes Between Staff and Management Regarding Placement Decisions
14. Effectiveness of Organizational Structure on Placement Decisions.

The recommendations related to each section are also provided at the end of each area reviewed. The next section of this report describes the methodology used in completing this review, followed by the various areas examined. The final sections are the conclusion, appendices, consultant's profile and references.

3. METHODOLOGY

Savoury Consulting Ltd. was engaged to complete a review of placement services and practices for Foster Homes for Family and Children's Services, Health and Social Services, Yukon, Canada, in September 2020, at which time the world was in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. Health and travel restrictions were in place so the methodology pivoted from the normal in person individual and group meetings to completing the review using technology such as video conferencing. To overcome any barriers and to optimize the process of completing the review using technology, it was necessary to be flexible and creative to allow enough time for maximum engagement. The focus was also on providing a safe environment where staff could openly share issues and concerns in confidence. Initial discussions regarding the scope of the project took place with Geri MacDonald, Director of Family and Children's Services, followed by regular updates.

A two-stage process was utilized to gather information from the key staff identified by Family and Children's Services, to participate in this review.

Stage one involved the circulation of a survey with key questions related to placement services (Appendix 3). Initial drafts were reviewed by Family and Children's Services and approved prior to circulation. The roles of staff who participated included managers, supervisors, social workers, caregiver support workers and case aides. The survey was sent to 23 staff and all 23 completed the survey. The results of the surveys are provided throughout this report, including some quotes from staff on the various issues. It is not possible to include all of the comments provided by staff so the comments selected are done in a way to reflect a balance of different perspectives and to ensure that they are not identifiable.

The survey contained questions on Culturally Safe Practices and Practices; Placement Policies, Programs and Standards; Caseload/Workload; Clinical Supervision and Case Consultation; Professional Training and Development; Training and Support for Foster Parents; Adequacy of Placement Options for Children Placed in Care; Standards and Policies for Documentation; Technology; Standards and Policies for Placing a Foster Home on Hold; Standards and Guidelines for Record Keeping Regarding Placement Decisions; Safety for Staff and Clients; Communication Processes Between Staff and Management

Regarding Placement Decisions and Effectiveness of Organization Structure on Placement Decisions. The survey also contained open ended questions on the Structure/Reporting Relationships; Aspects of Policies, Programs, Standards and Training that Impact on Placement Decisions; Strengths and Opportunities; Top Issues Affecting Placement Decisions and Solutions to Address Identified Issues.

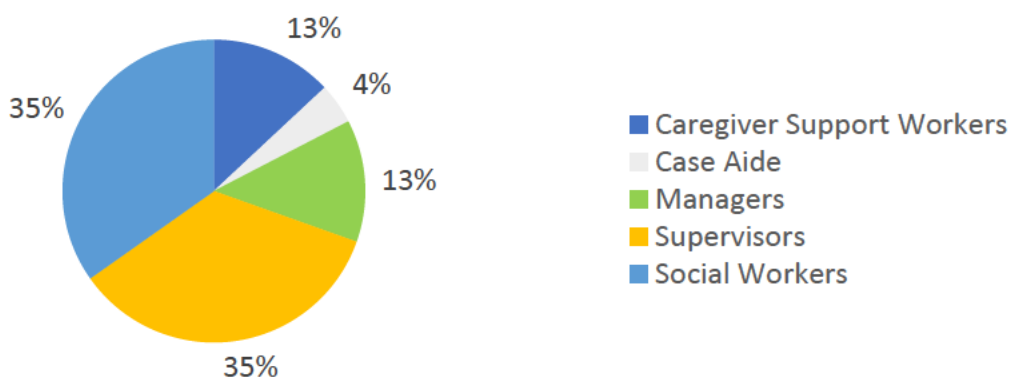
Staff had three choices on the survey with regard to each statement: agree; disagree or neither agree/nor disagree. There is always the concern with having a third option of neither agree/nor disagree (NAND) however by not providing this option there is the possibility that staff may skip the question entirely. Ethically, staff should have the option of selecting NAND. The question is often posed as to whether NAND option is the same as neutral (no opinion or impartial). While NAND maybe selected as a neutral option it maybe selected because staff may not know enough about an issue to select agree or disagree. Thus, neutral cannot necessarily be viewed as the same as the NAND option.

The surveys and interviews provided excellent information for this review. The fact that staff took the time from their busy schedules to participate in meetings and to respond to the survey questions is most appreciated. It also highlights their investment in their jobs and commitment to making improvements that are required to improve placement services.

The second stage of the review process involved staff engagement through group videos and/or teleconferencing, as well as feedback via emails. Whenever clarification of comments on a survey or further discussion was needed, individual phone calls were arranged. During video or teleconferencing, discussions focused on aspects of their work that were working well, issues or concerns, and their ideas and/or solutions to address the concerns. Staff were encouraged to follow up via email, if there was any additional information they felt should be considered. Special thanks to Linda Steinbach, Administrative and Research Assistant, for all of her work in arranging the various group and individual meetings.

Roles of staff who Completed the Survey and Location

Roles:



Locations:



The final part of the review process included the review of all pertinent placement policies and other documents related to placement services. These are included in the reference section of this report. Special thanks to Simone Fournel, Senior Policy and Project Strategist, who did an excellent job in making all of the documents available for review in a timely manner.


4. AREAS REVIEWED

1. Culturally Safe Principles and Practices

s.74(1)(a)

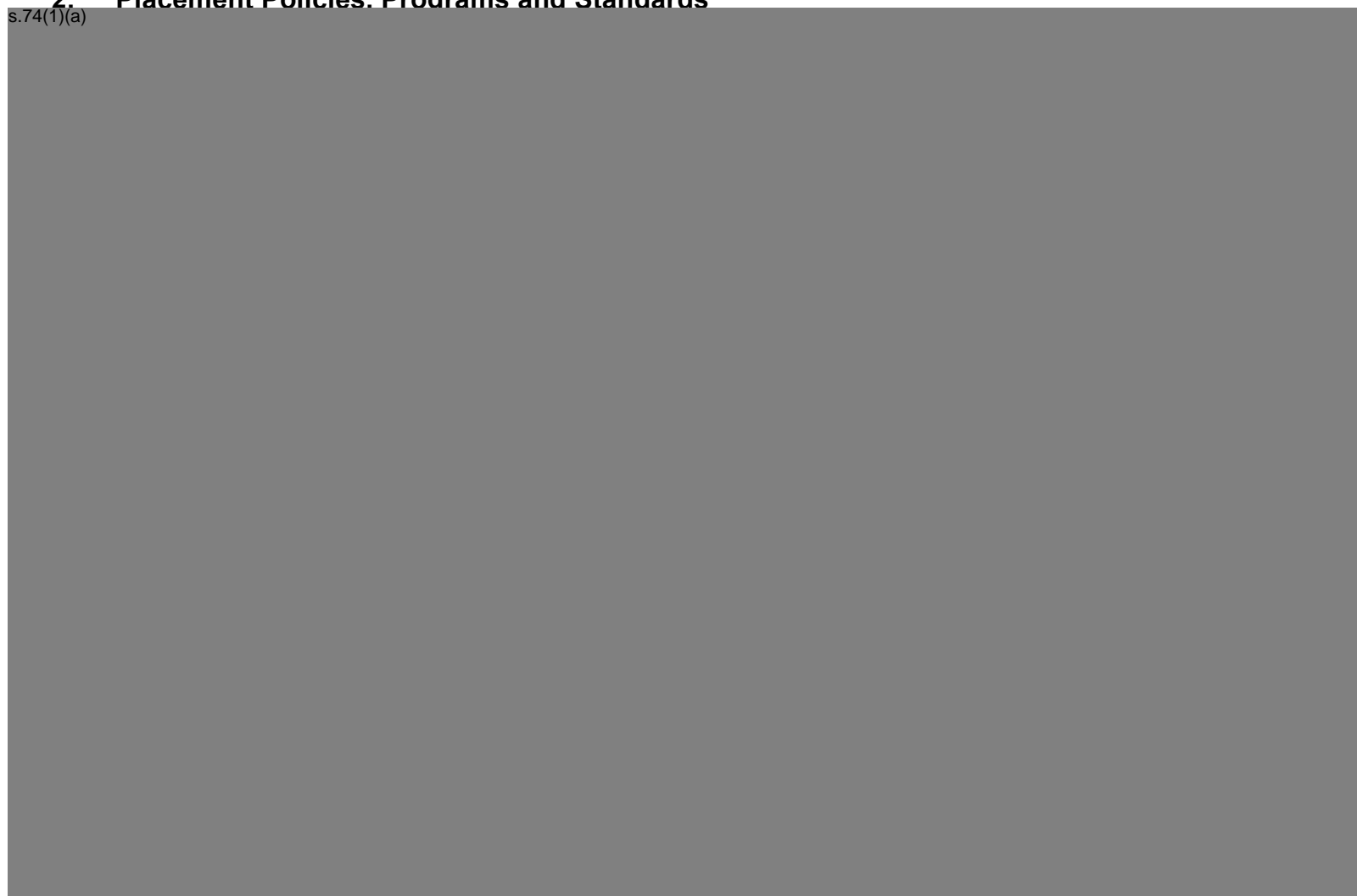
Recommendations on Culturally Safe Principles and Practices

s.74(1)(a)



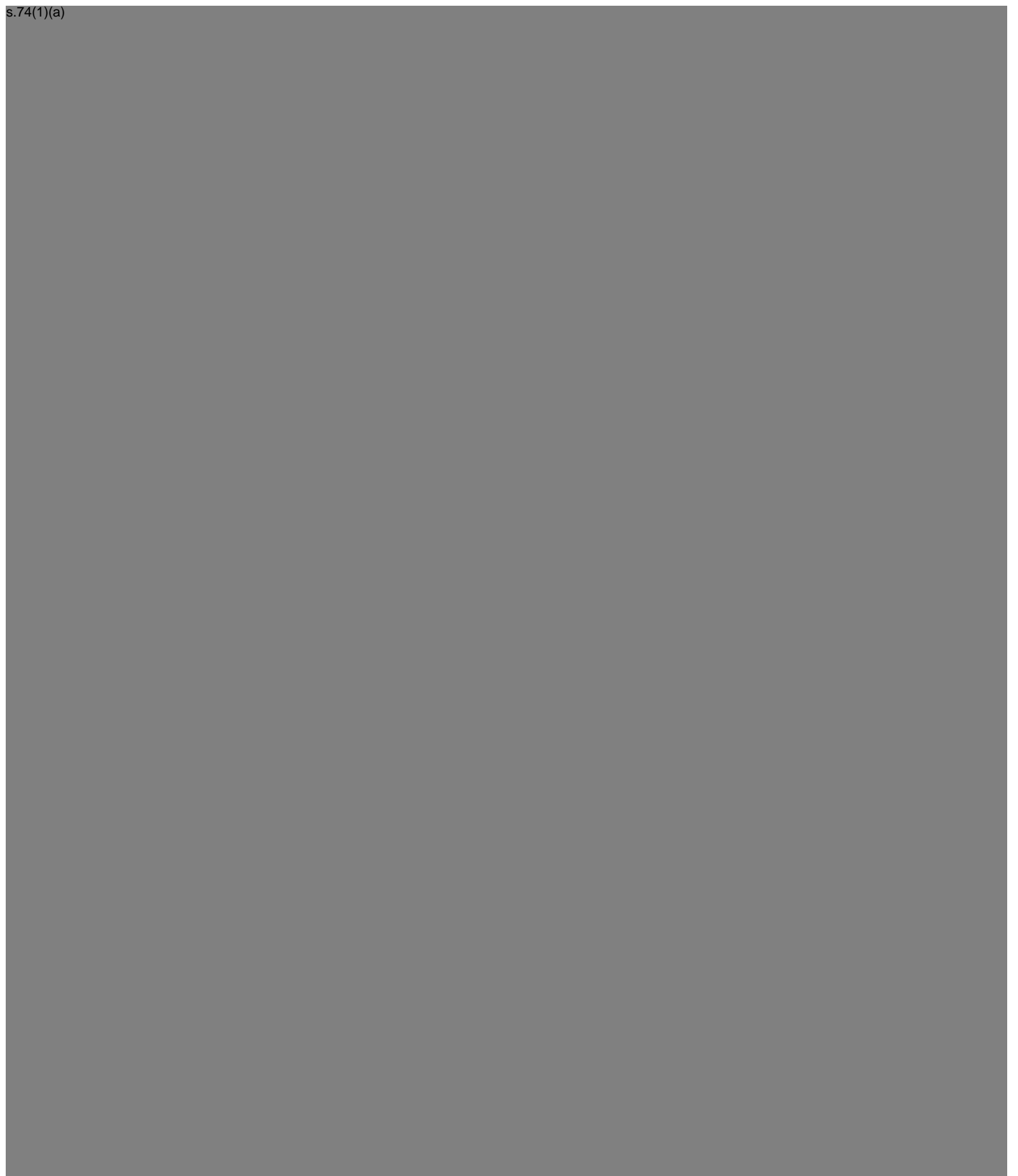
2. Placement Policies, Programs and Standards

s.74(1)(a)



Recommendations - Placement Policies, Programs and Standards

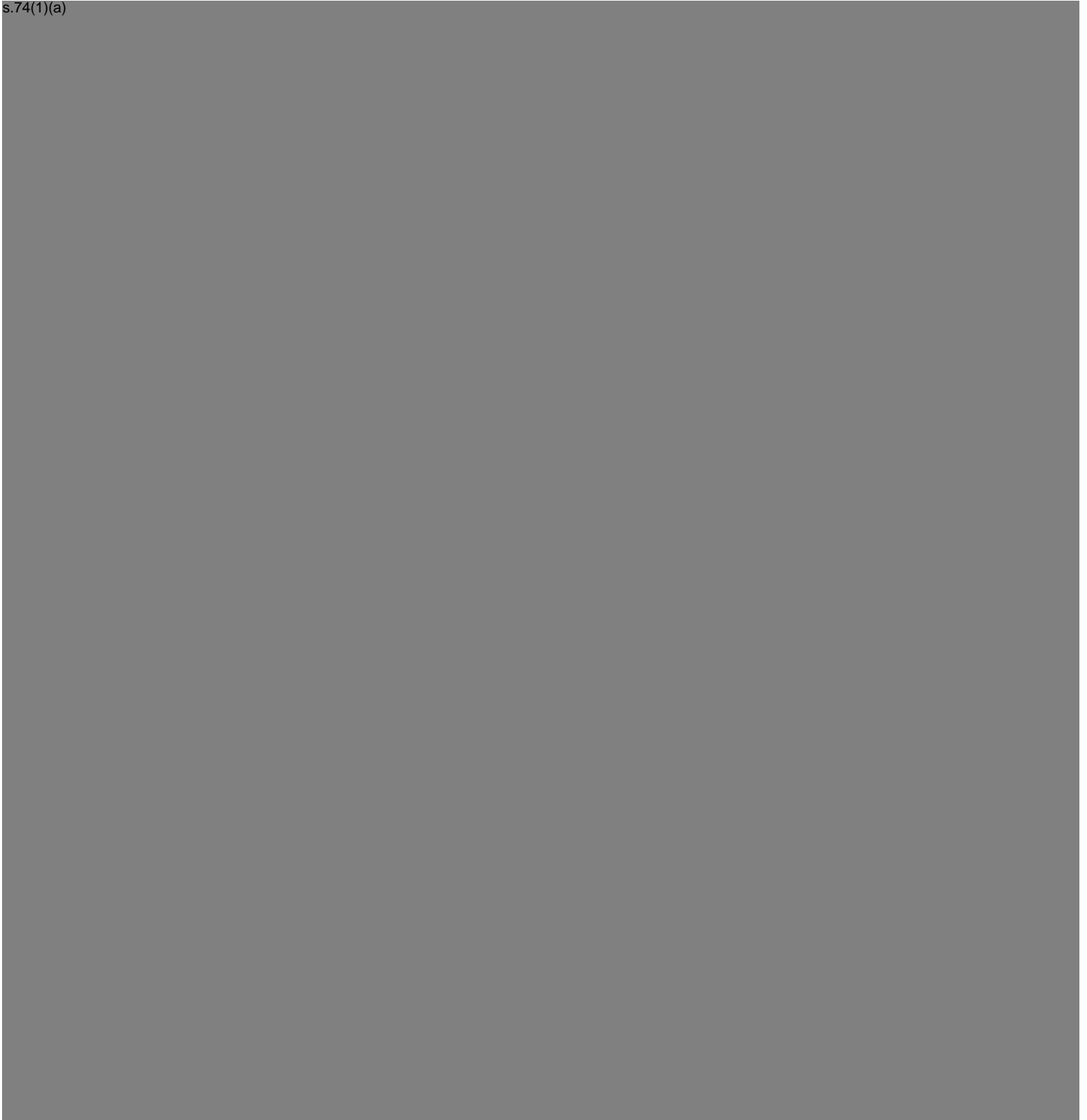


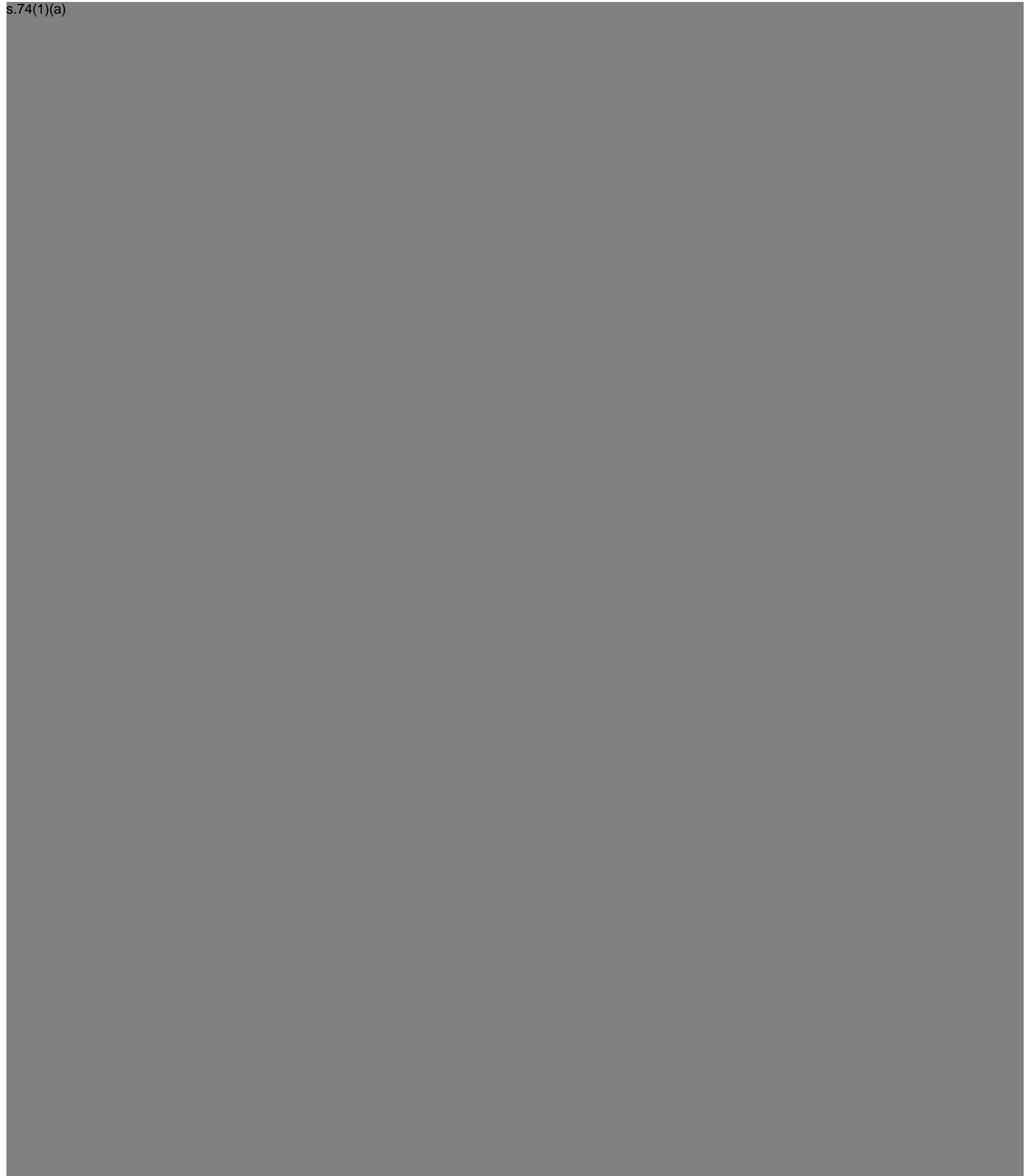




3. Caseload/Workload

s.74(1)(a)







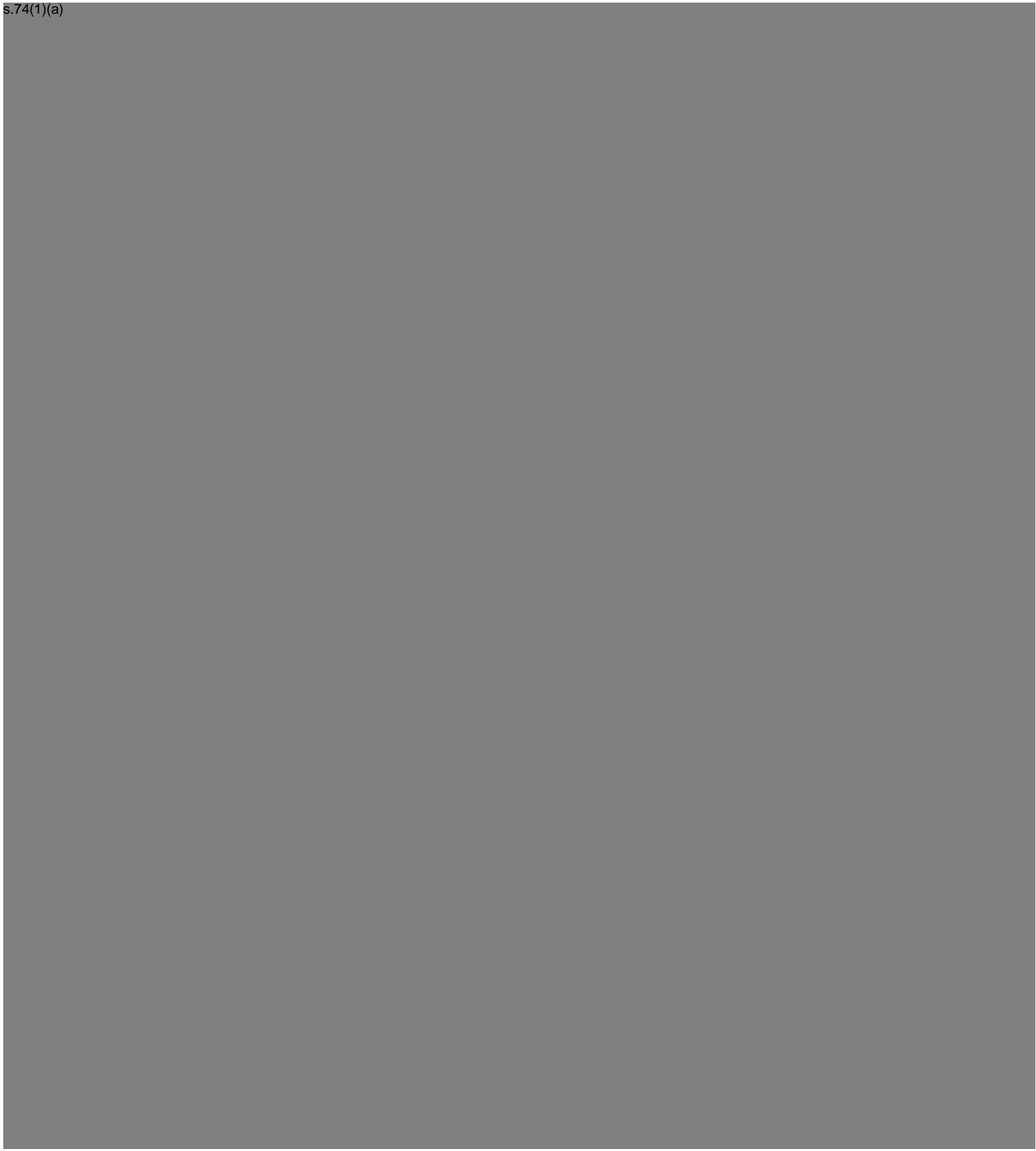


Recommendations- Caseload/Workload



4. Clinical Supervision

s.74(1)(a)





s.74(1)(a)

Recommendations – Clinical Supervision and Case Consultation

s.74(1)(a)

5. Professional Training and Development for Staff

s.74(1)(a)



Recommendations Regarding Professional Training and Development

s.74(1)(a)

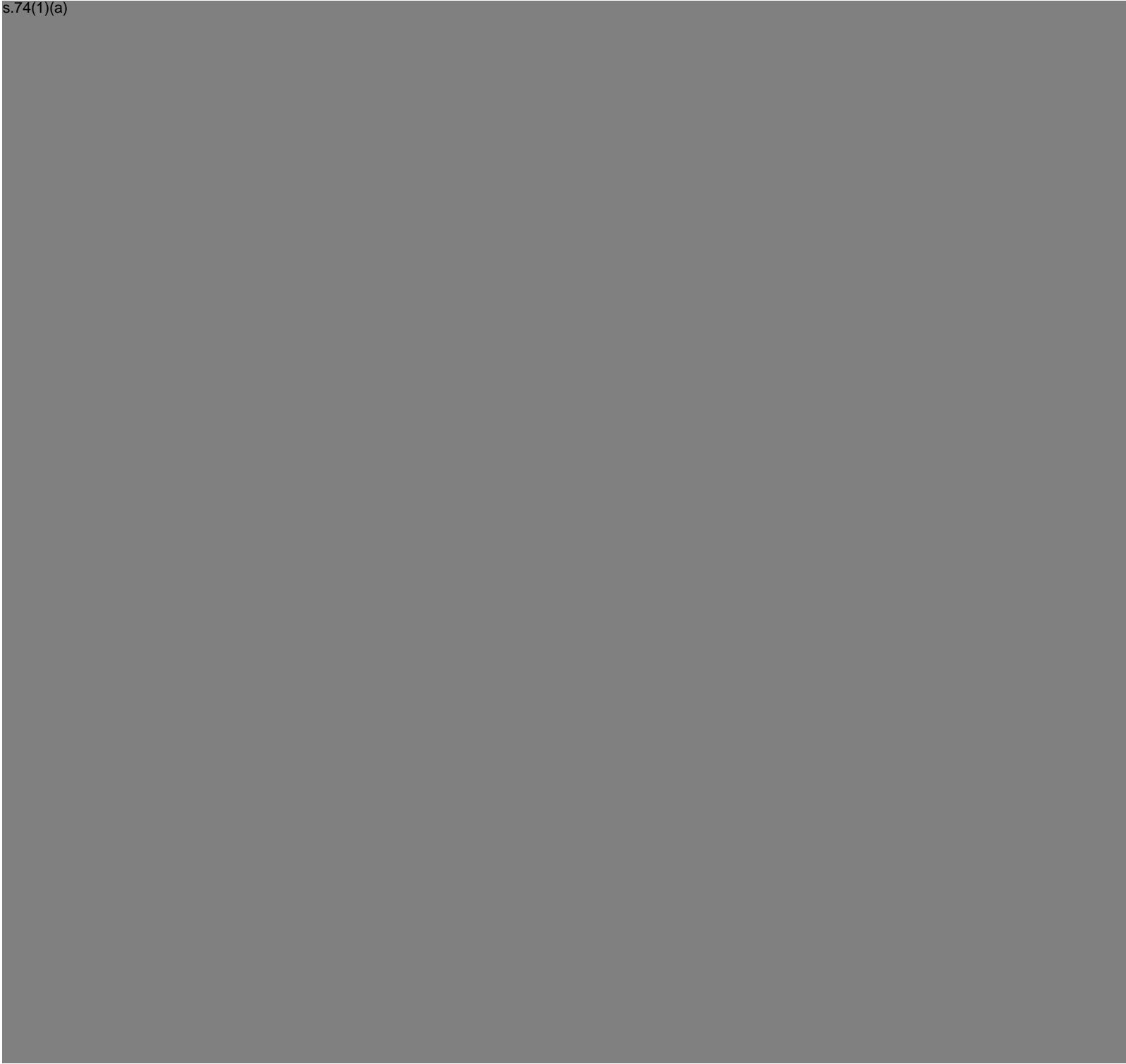


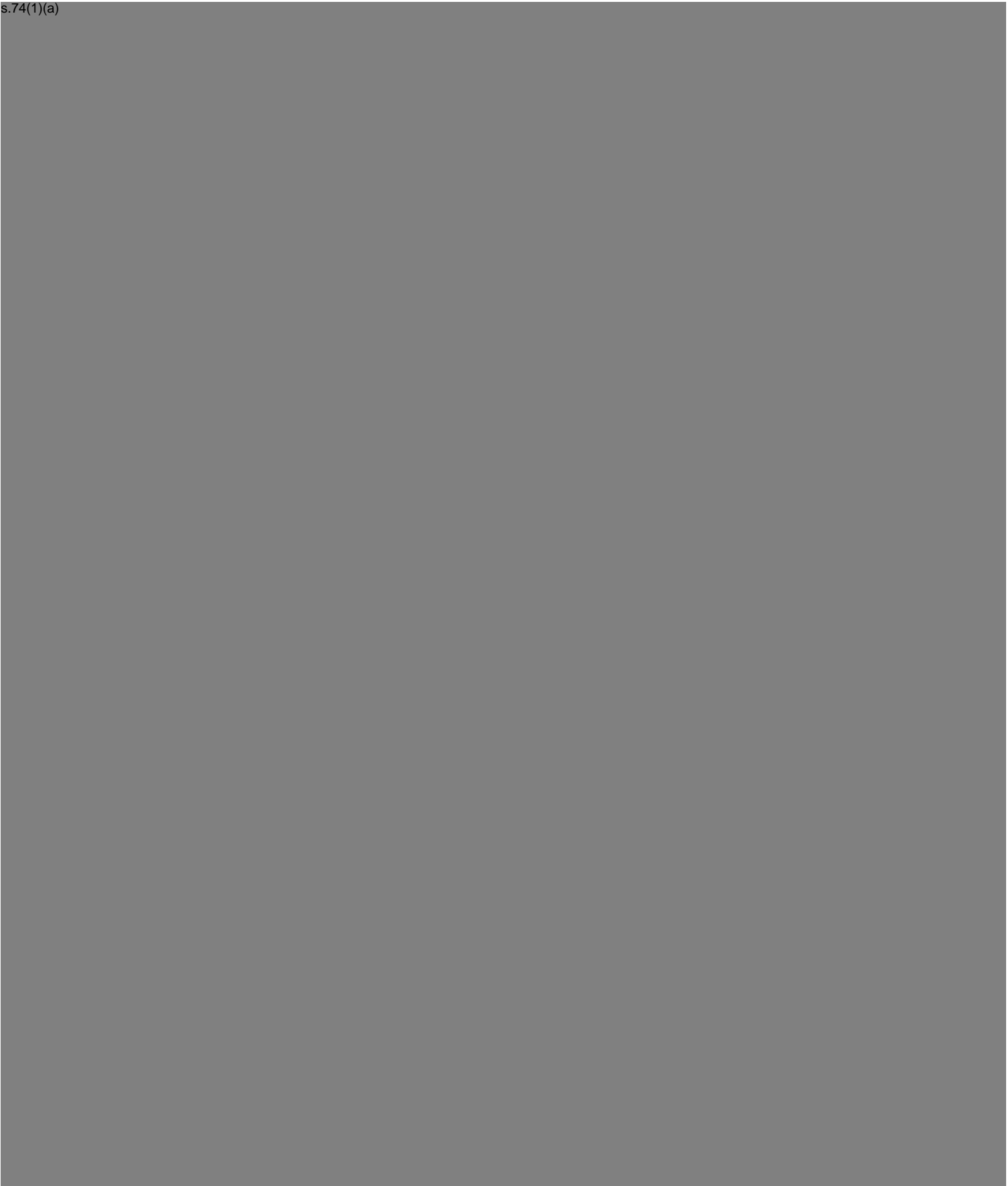
6. Training and Support for Foster Parents

s.74(1)(a)









Recommendations –Training and Support for Foster Parents

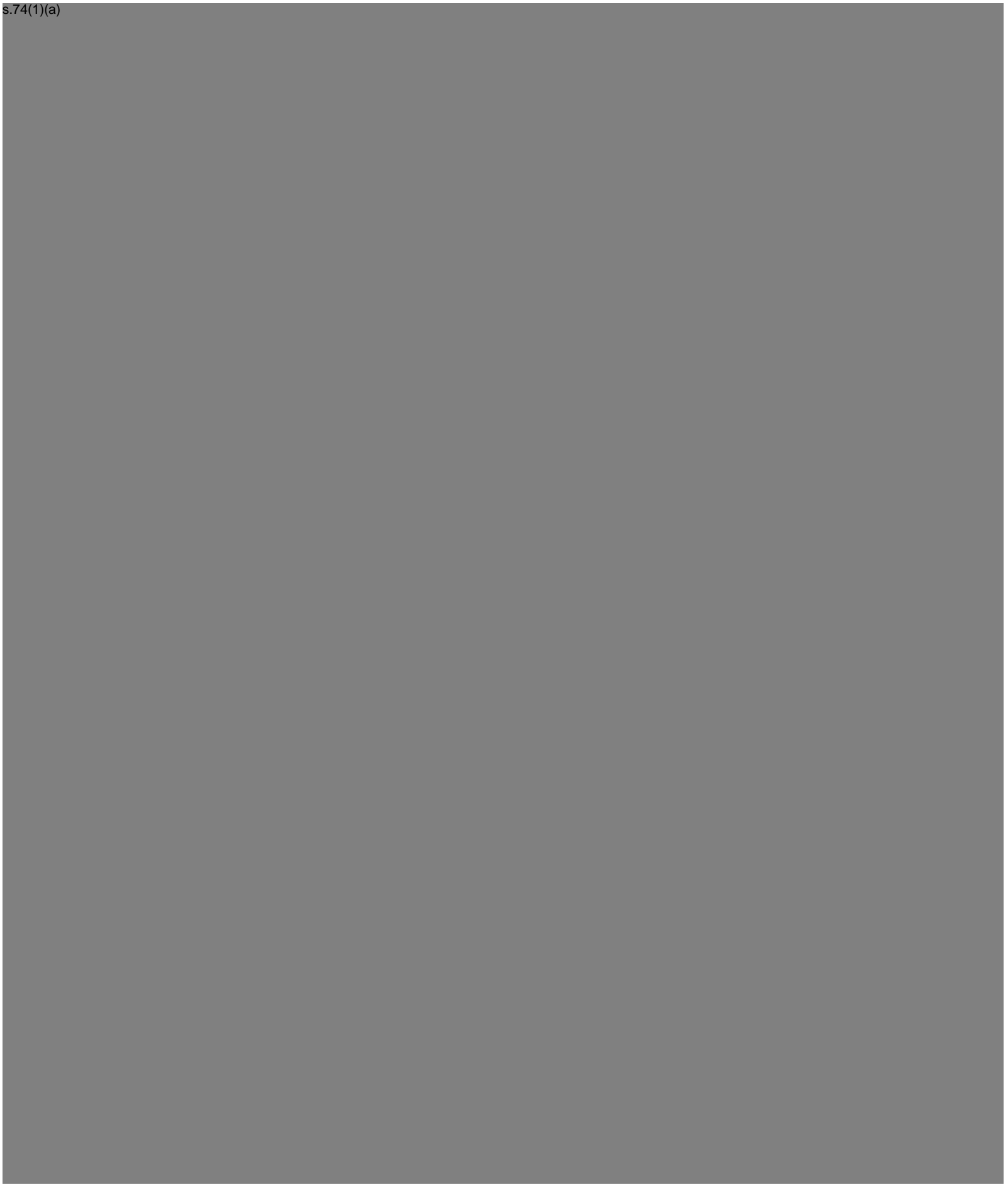
s.74(1)(a)

7. Adequacy of Placement Options

s.74(1)(a)







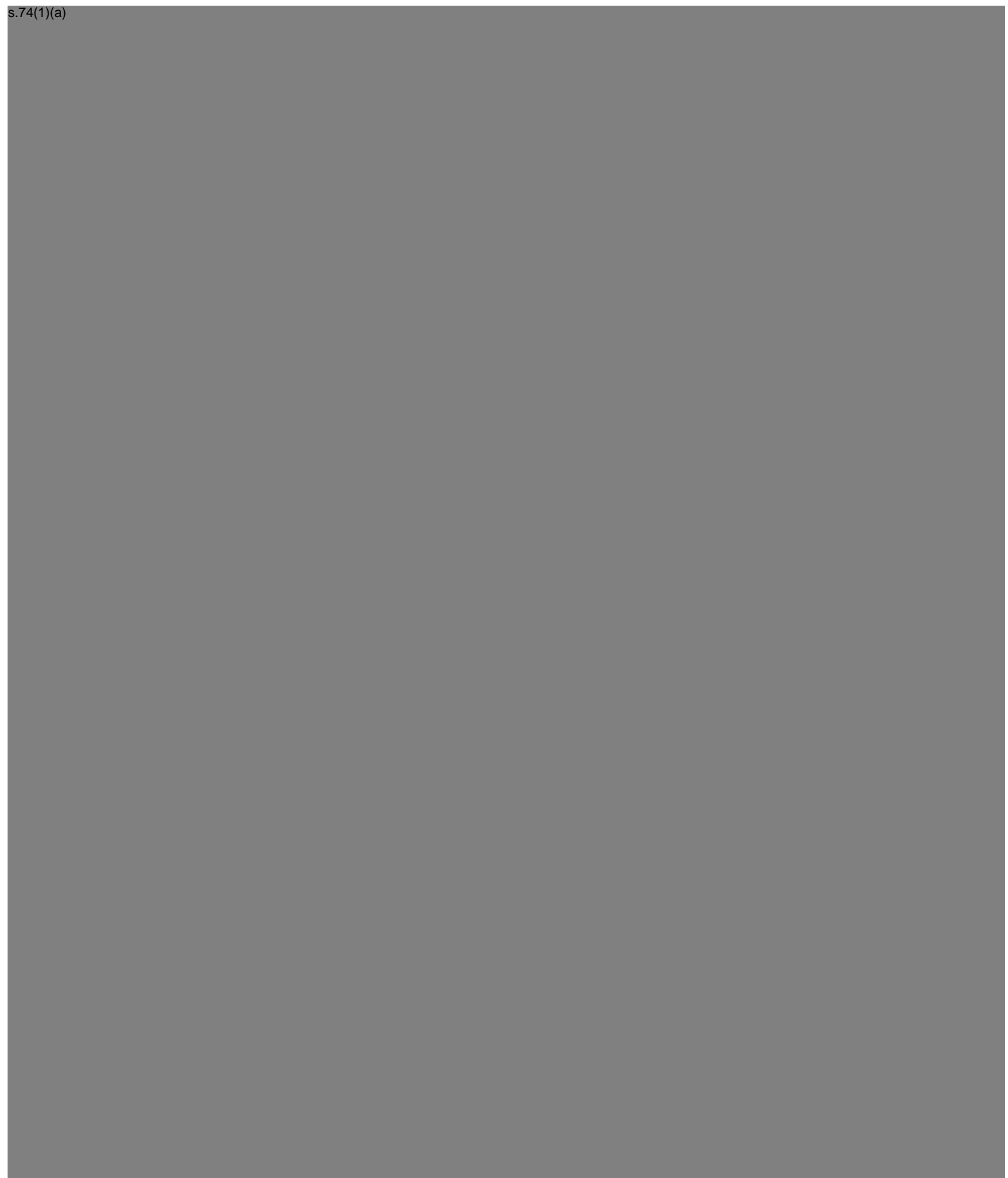
s.74(1)(a)

Recommendations – Placement Options

s.74(1)(a)

8. Standards and Policies for Documentation

s.74(1)(a)



Recommendations – Standards and Policies for Documentation of Allegations of Abuse in Care

9. Technology Available for Social Workers and Supervisors

Recommendation – Technology Available for Social Workers and Supervisors

10. Standards and Policies for Placing a Foster Home on Hold



Recommendations - Standards and Policies for Placing a Foster Home on Hold





11. Standards and Guidelines for Record Keeping Regarding Placement Decisions



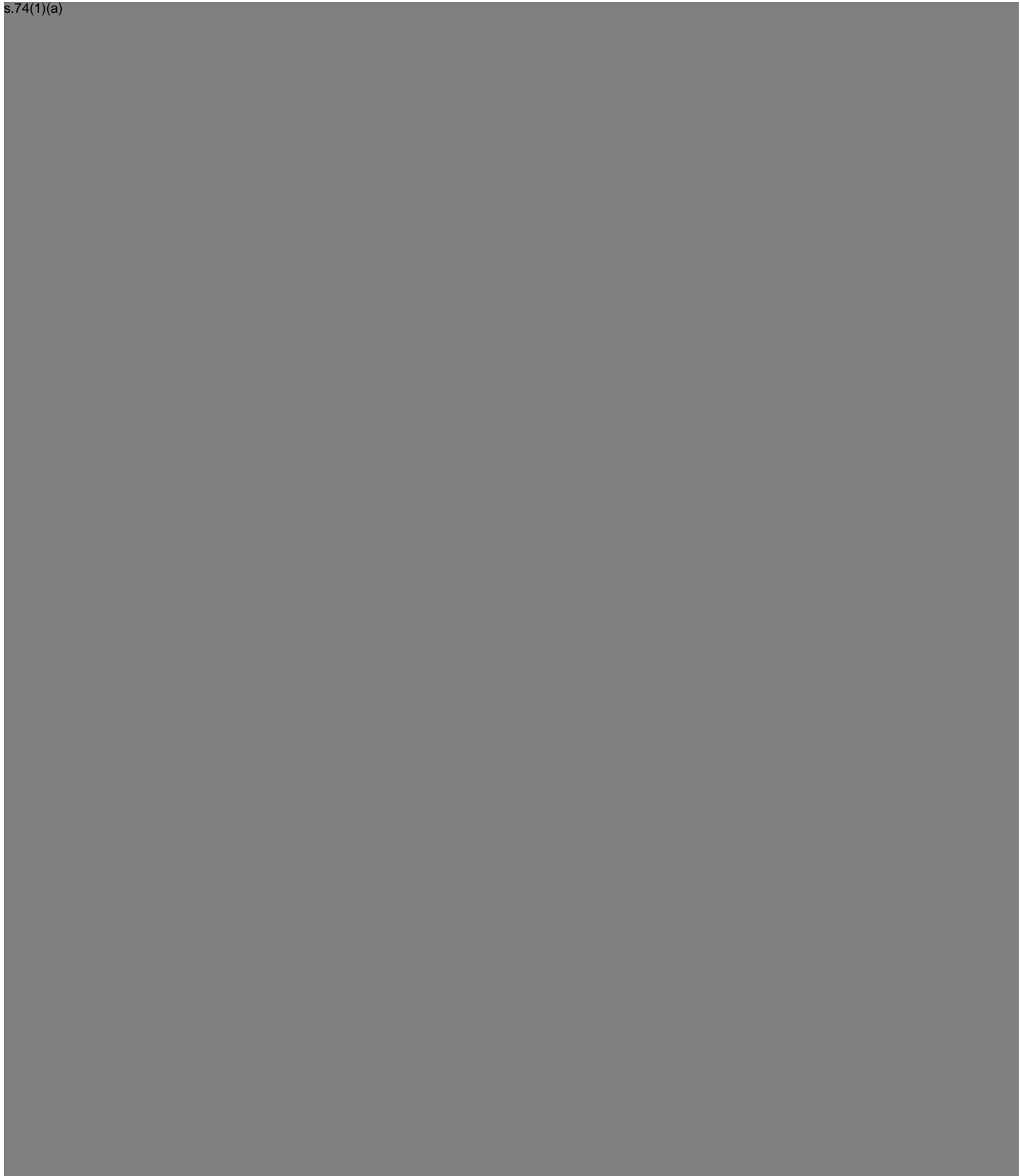


Recommendations - Standards and Guidelines for Record Keeping Regarding Placement Decisions



12. Safety for Staff and Clients





Recommendations – Safety for Staff and Clients

13. Communications Processes Between Staff and Management Regarding Placement Practices



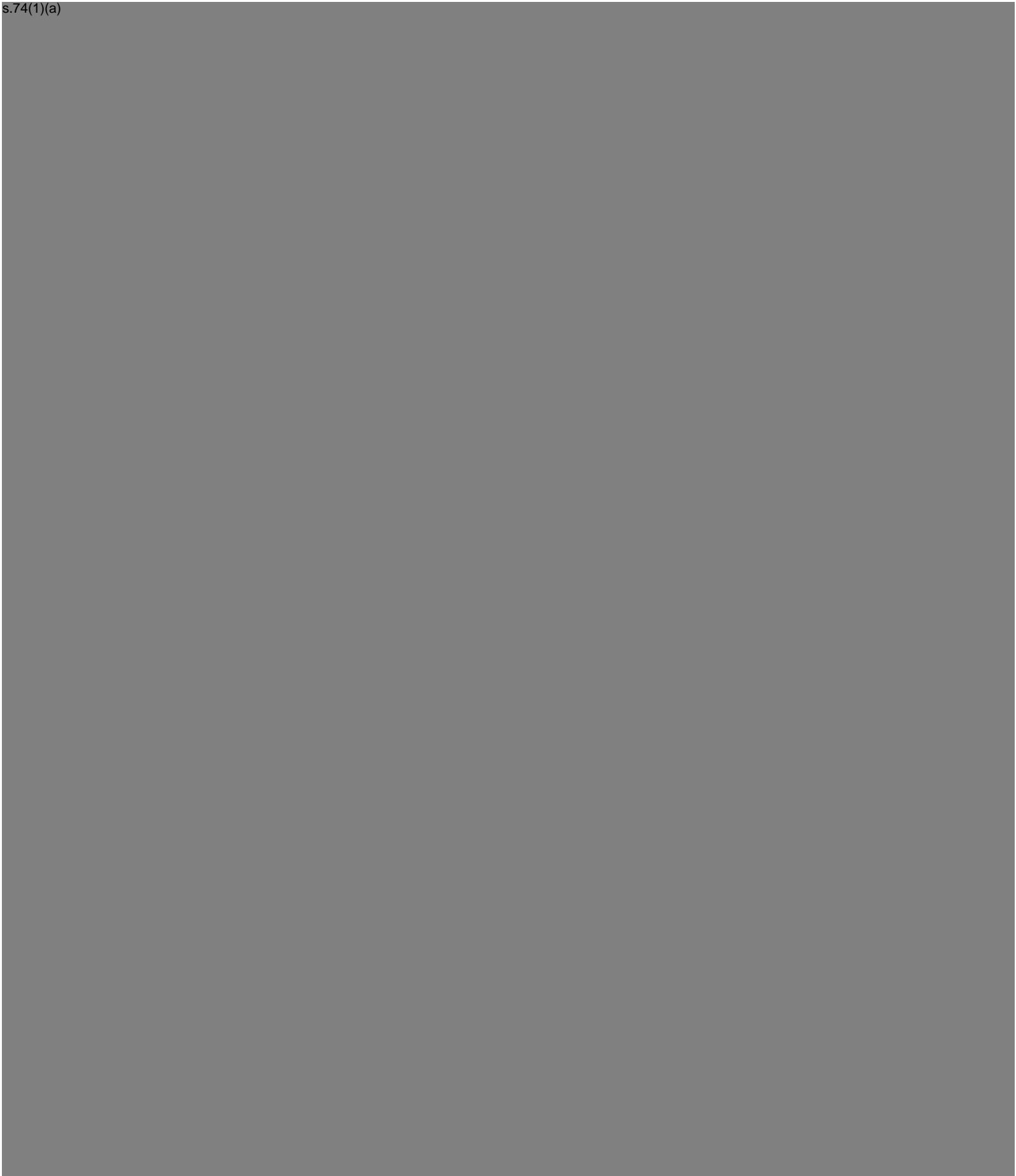


Recommendations – Communication Processes Between staff and Management Regarding Placement Practices



14. Effectiveness of Organizational Structure on Placement Decisions and Decision-Making in the Best Interests of Children





s.74(1)(a)

Recommendations - Effectiveness of Organizational Structure on Placement Decisions and Decision-Making in the Best Interests of Children

s.74(1)(a)

5. CONCLUSION

s.74(1)(a)


6. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – All of the Recommendations in This Report Are Listed Below

This Appendix is a re-cap of all of the recommendations that are included in the various sections of the report. They are provided in the order in which the various sections are covered in the report. Readers are encouraged to read the applicable section for the recommendations as it will provide the context for the recommendations below:


Culturally Safe Principles and Practices

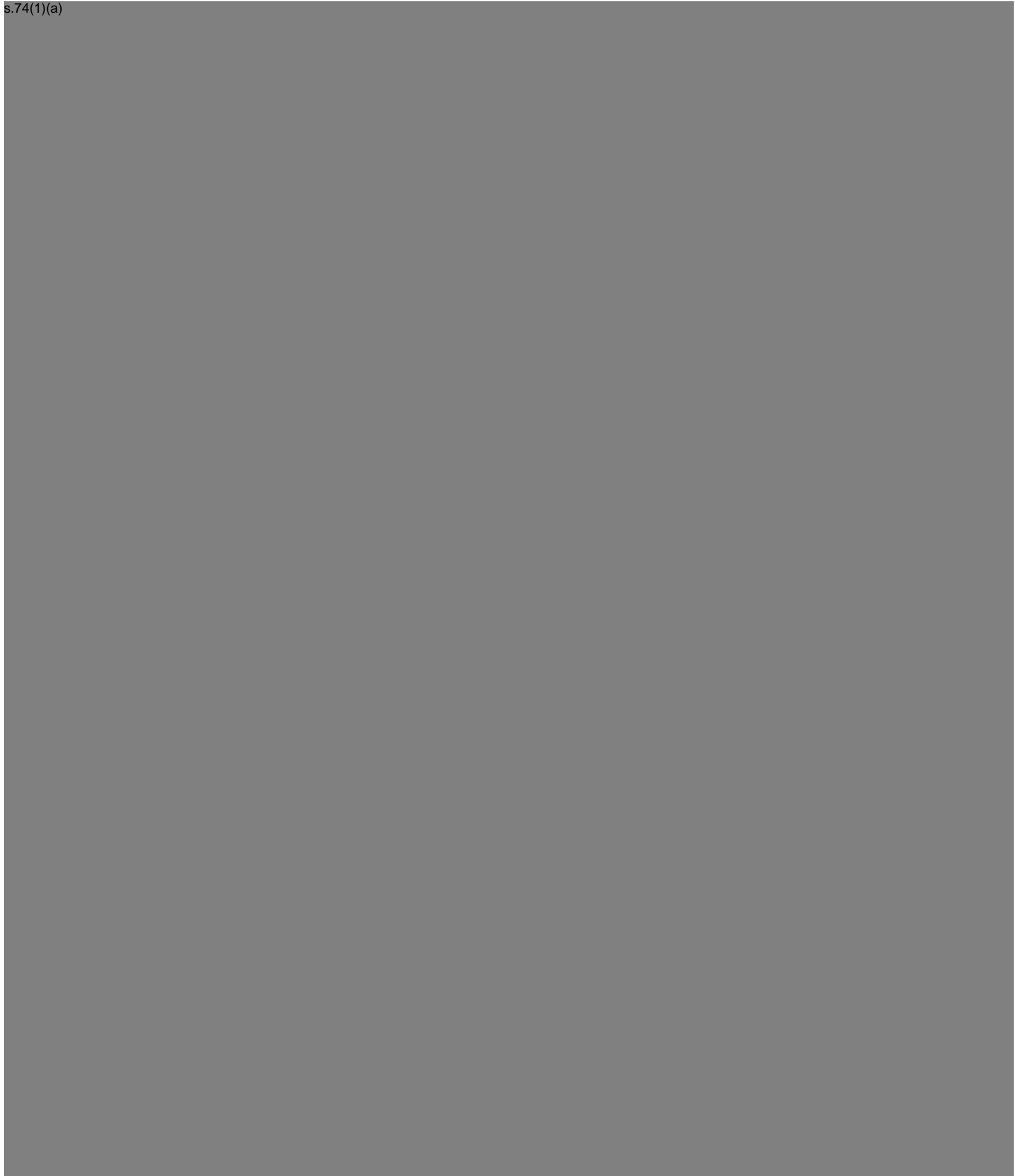
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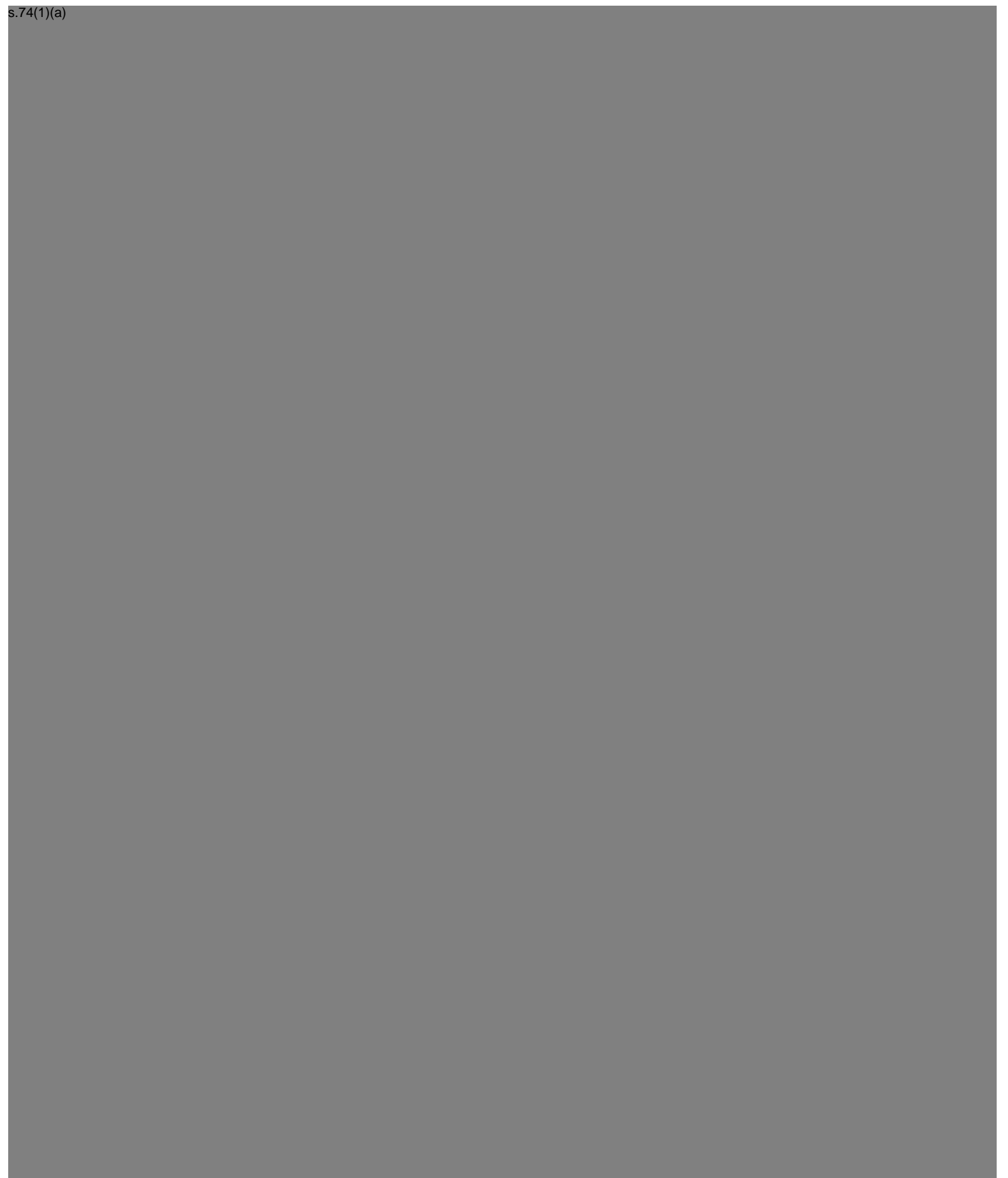


Placement Policies, Programs and Standards

s.74(1)(a)









Caseload/Workload

Clinical Supervision and Case Consultation

s.74(1)(a)



Professional Training and Development

s.74(1)(a)




Training and Support for Foster Parents

s.74(1)(a)




s.74(1)(a)




Adequacy of Placement Options

s.74(1)(a)




Standards and Policies for Documentation of Allegations of Abuse in Care

s.74(1)(a)




Technology Available for Social Workers and Supervisors

s.74(1)(a)




Standards and Policies for Placing a Foster Home on Hold

s.74(1)(a)




Standards and Guidelines for Record Keeping Regarding Placement Decisions

s.74(1)(a)




Safety for Staff and Clients

s.74(1)(a)



Communication Processes Between staff and Management Regarding Placement Practices

s.74(1)(a)



Effectiveness of Organizational Structure on Placement Decisions and Decision-Making in the Best Interests of Children

Appendix 2 - Organizational Charts



Adobe Acrobat
Document

Org. charts

Survey of Placement Policies and Practices in Foster Homes Health and Social Services, Yukon, Canada

Purpose

This survey is part of an independent review of placement policies and practices being conducted by George Savoury of Savoury Consulting Ltd. A specific focus will be on policies and decision-making processes utilized for placement when there is an allegation of or substantiated sexual abuse by a foster child residing within the foster home. The review will also look at collaboration and involvement of First Nations in processes and decisions and Regional versus Whitehorse processes. The aim of this review is to improve placement practices and decision making for staff responsible for making placement decisions.

Please respond to each question and include any pertinent comments. There are some open-ended questions at the end of the survey. The information collected will be used to get a better understanding of the policies, practices and issues related to this area of your work.

1. Culturally safe principles and practices are important in my organization, so that staff and foster parents feel respected and safe when they interact with the child welfare system. (Culturally safe services are free of racism, harassment and discrimination. Children, foster parents and staff are supported to draw strengths from their identity, culture and community.)

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree / Nor Disagree

Comments:

2. Placement policies, programs and standards are clear and enable the best possible placement decision making for the child.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree / Nor Disagree

Comments:

3. The caseload/workload is adequate for effective placement decision making, supporting children and foster parents and supervising foster parents when there are allegations of abuse against a foster child residing in the home.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree / Nor Disagree

Comments:

4. Clinical supervision and case consultation are available when making placement decisions.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree / Nor Disagree

Comments:

5. The professional training and development available enable me to perform effectively in my role.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree / Nor Disagree

Comments:

6. The training and support for foster parents are adequate for them to deal with allegations of sexual abuse by a foster child against another foster child in their home.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree / Nor Disagree

Comments:

7. There are adequate placement options available for children placed in care.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree / Nor Disagree

Comments:

8. Standards and policies are in place that require documentation be made within 24 hours of a foster home where a foster child who is the subject of allegations of sexual abuse against another foster child is present in a foster home.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree / Nor Disagree

Comments:

9. The technology in our system is available and used so that social workers and supervisors can easily access which foster homes are on hold and the reason(s) for the decision.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree / Nor Disagree

Comments:

10. Standards and policies are in place that provide clarity for staff on the conditions for when a foster home should be placed on hold for future placement and the process for such decisions.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree / Nor Disagree

Comments:

11. The standards and guidelines for record keeping regarding placement decisions, including the use of technological devices such as Dragon Naturally Speaking are available and appropriate.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree / Nor Disagree

Comments:

12. Safety for staff and clients is a priority in this organization.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree / Nor Disagree

Comments:

13. Communications processes (i.e., forums, staff meetings, supervision, etc.) in the organization between staff and management enable staff to bring forth and discuss issues to improve placement practices.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree / Nor Disagree

Comments:

14. The organizational structure enables effective placement decisions and decision-making that are in the best interests of children.

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither Agree / Nor Disagree

Comments:

15. Please comment on whether there are aspects of the structure/reporting relationships associated with placement decision making that can be improved and/or whether the current structure makes sense.

16. Please briefly describe any aspects of the policies, programs, standards and training that has an impact on the best possible placement decisions for children.

17. What do you see as the strengths and opportunities?
18. What are the top issues affecting placement decisions that are in the best interests of children?
19. What do you see as the solution(s) to address the issues you have identified?

Please indicate your role and your region/work location below:

Role: _____
(Please specify e.g., Social worker, Supervisor, etc.)

Region/Location: _____

The information you have provided in this survey will be held in the strictest confidence by Savoury Consulting Ltd. Findings from the surveys will be summarized without identifying information and included in the final report.

Please forward your completed survey to georgesavoury@gmail.com

Thank you for completing this survey.

Savoury Consulting Ltd.

www.savouryconsulting.com

902 717 2498

Appendix 4 - Sibling Sexual Abuse - A Guide for Parents



Adobe Acrobat
Document

Sibling Sexual Abuse - A Guide for Parents

Placement Care Social Worker

Duties Include:

- providing clinical services to assigned resource homes primarily kin-in-care and assist caregivers to meet the needs of the child/ren placed in their care;
- ensuring that all requirements of Foster Care Standards are in compliance;
- providing understanding and leadership during the annual foster care licensing process;
- writing annual reports, incident reports, and documentation of contacts;
- participating in 7-day, 30 day and 90 day in home visits collaborating with the Family Services Worker and the Child's worker;
- assessing and evaluating care provided by the resource;
- interpreting policies and procedures and legislation as required ;
- facilitating growth and development of caregivers including identification of training and learning needs, promoting participation, and ensuring skill and knowledge development;
- facilitating child placement into the foster homes and keep placement teams informed about the status and recommend usage of the homes;
- mediating and negotiating areas of conflict between resource families, workers, neighbourhood, and community resources;
- assisting in identifying and assessing potential relief caregivers to support a resource family;
- participating in the identification and development of support services for caregivers;
- participating, in case conferences, placement planning conferences, plans of care and other related meetings;
- facilitating and participating in mandatory monthly support groups;
- participating in staff meetings at team and branch levels;
- conducting comprehensive SAFE assessment in accordance with policy and foster and group care standards and guidelines;
- reviewing assessment findings with prospective applicants;
- arranging for potentially suitable applicants to attend information sessions and scheduling, preparing and conducting group information sessions for prospective applicants as required;
- making appropriate referrals to other services or agencies as required;
- assisting other Foster Care Service teams with coverage as required;
- providing intake coverage for the unit as required;
- preparing and delivering training to the general resource community as required;

- Work in a safe manner in accordance with the Society's Health & Safety Policies and procedures and all relevant legislation.

Qualifications Required

- B.S.W./M.S.W. degree from a University of recognized standing
- knowledge of the Child and Family Services Act, Foster Care Standards, Child Sexual Abuse Protocol and Youth Criminal Justice Act;
- excellent knowledge of normal/abnormal child development;
- excellent assessment skills and crisis intervention;
- excellent knowledge and skills in systems theory, family theory and its application;
- knowledge of adult learning principles and motivational theory;
- excellent knowledge and skills/expertise in group work;
- excellent knowledge of the purpose, nature and dynamics of fostering;
- excellent knowledge of the concept of permanency planning;
- excellent communication and report writing skills;
- excellent interpersonal skills in order to work within a team and engender trust and optimism;
- excellent organizational ability and demonstrated mediation skills;
- understanding of, and commitment to integrating the values, the mission statement, the principles of equity, justice, no discrimination, accessibility into practice, service delivery, and team relationships;
- ability to use a computer for recording documentation

Appendix 6 - Supervisor Feedback Form

Supervisor feedback survey

Employee Feedback

In order to help strengthen the quality of supervision and leadership at our Department, we are asking for your input on your current supervisor. Your feedback will provide information to both your supervisor and your supervisor's supervisor.

The survey is also anonymous, meaning no information will be collected on who completed what survey.

This survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Once completed please return it to your PDM who will summarize all of the surveys. The summarized results will be shared with your supervisor to support them in their growth and development.

Thank you for completing the survey.

Supervisor feedback survey

1. Treatment

For these questions think about your experiences with your supervisor over the past year. How much do you agree with the following statements about your supervisor who will summarize the results in one survey?

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Do not have enough information to rate him/her |
|---|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|--|
| My supervisor is open and approachable | | | | | |
| My supervisor asks for my input on decisions that affect my work assignments and/or my department | | | | | |
| My supervisor listens to my concerns | | | | | |
| My supervisor provides me adequate direction in order for me to know what is expected of me. | | | | | |
| My supervisor provides me with adequate feedback on my job performance | | | | | |
| My supervisor ensures I receive the training I need to do my job | | | | | |
| My supervisor treats me with respect | | | | | |

Supervisor feedback survey

2. Communication

For these questions, think about your experiences with your supervisor over the past year. How good do you think your supervisor is at the following things:

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Do not have enough information to rate him/her |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|--|
| My supervisor keeps me informed of what is occurring throughout the organization | | | | | |
| My supervisor meets regularly with me | | | | | |
| Because of my supervisor, I have a clear understanding of the role and mission of the organization | | | | | |
| Because of my supervisor, I understand the importance of my position in achieving the organization's goals. | | | | | |
| My supervisor has a vision for the organization and has effectively communicated that vision in a manner that is understandable to me. | | | | | |

Supervisor feedback survey

3. Leadership

For these questions, think about your experiences with your supervisor over the past year. How good do you think your supervisor is at the following things:

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Do not have enough information to rate him/her |
|---|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|--|
| My supervisor demonstrates integrity and sets the example for others to follow | | | | | |
| My supervisor is clear about his/her expectations about accepted behavior within the work environment. | | | | | |
| My supervisor is a professional who strives to raise the level of professionalism throughout the organization | | | | | |
| My supervisor holds me accountable for my performance | | | | | |
| My supervisor treats me and other employees fairly | | | | | |
| My supervisor considers the impact of decisions on employees when considering courses of action | | | | | |
| I have confidence in my supervisor | | | | | |

Supervisor feedback survey

4. Collaboration and Development

For these questions, think about your experiences with your supervisor over the past year. How good do you think your supervisor is at the following things:

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree | Do not have enough information to rate him/her |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|--|
| I am able to participate in setting the goals for my department. | | | | | |
| My supervisor establishes an environment where every employee can contribute in discussions about setting goals for the organization | | | | | |
| I feel my opinion is considered prior to decisions being made that affect me | | | | | |
| I feel that I am valued by the organization and my supervisor | | | | | |
| My supervisor engages me in reflective practice and critical thinking | | | | | |
| My supervisor supports my professional development through coaching and support for workshops/conferences. | | | | | |

Supervisor feedback survey

5. Thanks

Thanks for your feedback.

Appendix 7 - Terms of Reference for Support Meeting with Foster Parents - NS Federation of Foster Families

Central Region Fostering Focus Team Terms of Reference

Purpose:

We believe that organizational health requires a relationship built on a strong foundation of open communication, shared understanding, and respectful practice. The purpose of this committee is to build on the pre-existing foundation between foster families and the Department of Community Services in order to enhance opportunities for collaboration and strengthen service delivery in the Central Region.

Membership:

- Co-chairs: Specialist responsible for Foster Care Program/E.D. of the FFFNS
- Director of Service Delivery
- Coordinator of Foster Care Services
- Child Welfare Specialist
- Service Delivery Managers
- Executive Director of the FFFNS & other FFFNS program reps
- Representation from the Foster Parent Community (Foster Parents)
- Representation from the following programs:
 - Children-in-Care
 - Protection & Intake
 - Foster Care
 - Access & Transportation
- Each rep should have an alternate representative that can attend in their absence; however, members recognize the importance of consistency in attendance of the core group when possible.

Objectives/Strategies:

1. To discuss present issues in fostering that are of this region's child welfare system in a solution focused manner.
2. To present direct feedback from Foster Parents on their experiences in order to shape the local fostering system within the context of Provincial Policy.
3. To improve communication.
4. To provide a forum to discuss provincial issues impacting fostering that can then be fed back to the relevant channel within the Department of Community Services.

Goal:

This group will focus on creating cohesion and consistency within the Central Region Child Welfare System. As it impacts on fostering, communication structures will be built and enhanced to ensure that feedback from users is received at the proper level and dealt with in a timely manner.

Meetings:

This group will meet three times a year: September, December, & June

Terms of Reference:

Terms of Reference are viewed as a living document and will be reviewed annually at the Spring meeting in June.

Purpose:

We believe that organizational health requires a relationship built on a strong foundation of open communication, shared understanding, and respectful practice. The purpose of this committee is to build on the pre-existing foundation between foster families and the Department of Community Services in order to enhance opportunities for collaboration and strengthen service delivery in the Western Region.

Membership:

- Director of Service Delivery
- Child Welfare Specialist
- Executive Director of the FFFNS & other FFFNS program reps
- Representation from the Foster Parent Community
- Representation from the following programs:
 - Children-in-Care
 - Protection & Intake
 - Foster Care
 - Access & Transportation
 - Coordinator of Foster Care Services (DCS)
- Each rep should have an alternate representative that can attend in their absence; however, members recognize the importance of consistency in attendance of the core group when possible

Objectives/Strategies:

1. To discuss present issues in fostering that are of this region's child welfare system in a solution focused manner.
2. To present direct feedback from Foster Parents on their experiences in order to shape the local fostering system within the context of Provincial Policy.
3. To improve communication that is clear and concise.
4. To improve a forum to discuss provincial issues impacting fostering that can then be fed back to the relevant channel with the Department of Community Services.

Goal:

This group will focus on creating cohesion and consistency within the Western Region Child Welfare System as it impacts on fostering communication structures will be built and enhanced to ensure that feedback from users is received at the proper level and dealt with in a timely manner.

Meetings:

This group will meet three times a year: September, December, & June

Terms of Reference:

Terms of Reference are viewed as a living document and will be reviewed annually at the Spring meeting in June.



Adobe Acrobat
Document

Substitute Care Provider Safety Plan

Appendix 9 - Leadership Competency Framework



Adobe Acrobat
Document

Leadership Competency Framework

Appendix 10 - Structured Analysis Family Evaluation (SAFE)

SAFE is a structured home study methodology that allows child welfare agencies to effectively and systematically evaluate prospective families for foster and adoptive placement. The SAFE Desk Guide provides a uniformity of evaluation which is fair to all Applicants as well as a tool of clinical support to Home Study Practitioners.

Traditional home studies require Home Study Practitioners to read through pages of self-reporting by Applicants such as autobiographies, pre-formatted self-reporting tools that can take hours to make sense of and process. Self reporting is usually self-serving and allows Applicants to minimize the issues Home Study Practitioners should be addressing. SAFE provides Questionnaires that allow Home Study Practitioners to hone in on what issues need to be addressed with the Applicants. This helps not waste their time (or the Applicant's time) on issues that have no bearing on the Applicant's current functioning or ability to parent.

The structured nature of SAFE mandates a step-by-step process throughout the home study. The final step of SAFE creates a template for the Home Study Practitioner to evaluate an Applicant's strengths and issues. This allows them to focus on real issues of concern and ignore that those that don't shade the Applicant's ability to function or parent. SAFE also focuses on the strengths that Applicants have and how those strengths can and will aid them in parenting. The SAFE home study report is shorter than traditional home studies as it focuses on what is important instead of an autobiographical piece that has no critical analysis of what is important.

Ultimately, a home study is a placement document. A thorough home study should be a critical analysis of families who come forward to foster or adopt that provides a truthful view of a family's strengths and issues of concern as well as what children they can parent successfully. Without this critical analysis, families can be placed with children who will push them beyond their emotional and physical abilities. This can (and frequently does) result in further abuse of children or disruption. A well done home study protects both children and Applicants alike.

Due to its structured process, accountability of information gathering, and analysis, SAFE provides a high level of legal protections for agencies - both public and private. SAFE minimizes liability.

There are Four Components to SAFE:

Information Gathering Tools

SAFE provides practitioners with uniform information gathering tools that support the home study interview. These tools include **Questionnaire I**, **Questionnaire II**, and the **SAFE Reference Letter**. These tools aid the Home Study Practitioner in doing more targeted interviewing. The Questionnaires and Reference Letter assist the Home Study Practitioner in identifying strengths, as well as issues to be addressed early in the home study process, thereby eliminating a great deal of time "guessing and/or fishing" for issues that should be addressed or explored further.

Structured Analysis

SAFE has identified 70 Psychosocial Factors that research has demonstrated to be necessary for safe

and effective parenting - either through adoption, kin or foster care. The **SAFE Desk Guide** and **Psychosocial Inventory** provide an inter-related, supported and structured process to assist Home Study Practitioners in determining the strengths and limitations of a particular Applicant Family.

Pre-Formatted Home Study Report

The Pre-Formatted Home Study Report is uniform in its organization and appearance, but is tailored to each state or province's requirements. Each SAFE Home Study looks exactly alike while still meeting the needs of individual regulations, laws, and rules of a state or a province. Because of the uniform nature of the Pre-Formatted Home Study Report, the SAFE home study reader knows exactly where to look for the issues and strengths of the Applicant Family and how those strengths and/or issues might affect either a specific child or child yet to be identified.

The Compatibility Inventory

The SAFE Compatibility Inventory helps support placement workers in determining the appropriateness of fit of an Applicant Family and the child or children in question.

“SAFE is a structured evaluation process that assists practitioners in identifying and addressing both strengths and areas of concern that may impede current functioning as well as safe and effective parenting. SAFE provides Home Study Practitioners with a structured methodology that supports the social work interview as well as provides a uniform methodology of interpreting and assessing the information gathered during the home study process.”

SAFE emphasizes three major themes: uniformity, comprehensiveness, and quality. Whether they are inter-jurisdictional, inner-jurisdictional, or “in house” home studies, these issues are also the themes inhibiting the willingness of agencies to make out of jurisdiction placements. SAFE users, whether public or private, have common methodology, forms, procedures, evaluation guides, and language that allows for direct, detailed, and precise communication and cooperation. The same tools, process, and structure are used in each and every SAFE Home Study, making it very difficult for a Home Study Practitioner to cut corners or miss important issues.

Implementing SAFE in your Agency

1. Meeting-Senior Management of Agency and Consortium for Children

The SAFE Staff is happy to meet with you and your senior staff (with no cost to your agency) to provide the following:

- Overview of the SAFE Instrument
- Discussion of how SAFE works with your current system
- Questions and Answers

2. Agency Decides to Implement SAFE

- Licensing Agreement signed with Consortium for Children
- Determination of how and where SAFE will be used within the Child Welfare System, e.g., Adoption (domestic and international), foster care, kinship care
- Identify SAFE Liaison for Consortium for Children
- Implementation date of SAFE determined
- SAFE and Home Study Updates – process and format

3. Home Study Reports Developed

- Agency reviews basic Home Study Report
- Consortium for Children creates State or Province specific Home Study Reports and uploads them to the safehomestudy.org website
- Every SAFE jurisdiction or agency is assigned their own section of the restricted portion of the SAFE website

4. Training of Home Study Practitioners

- Schedule training dates for 2-day SAFE Training for Home Study Practitioners (mandatory)
- Schedule training dates for 1/2-day Supervisor Training (mandatory)
- Schedule training dates for 1-day Home Study Interview Training (optional)

5. Periodic Evaluation of SAFE Home Studies

- Provide CFC with a reasonable number of redacted SAFE Home Studies for evaluation and feedback to jurisdiction to determine additional training needs, program improvements, Supervisorial skills, etc.

Consortium for Children believes that the jurisdictions/agencies who use SAFE are our partners and we strive to help users better their practice, perform better home studies and improve their child placement abilities. We are committed to supporting you and your staff on a long term basis. With this in mind Consortium for Children maintains a clinical and technical support hotline for use by SAFE Certified Home Study Practitioners.

Source : <http://www.safehomestudy.org/SAFE/SAFE-Overview.aspx>

7. CONSULTANT PROFILE

George R. Savoury, MSW, RSW, - Savoury Consulting Ltd.

284 Astral Drive, Dartmouth, NS B2V 1B8 www.savouryconsulting.com

George Savoury has extensive public service and consulting experience in the field of social services with the governments of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia and as a Consultant with Savoury Consulting Ltd. He has held positions such as Social Worker, Supervisor, District Manager, Regional Administrator, Director of Child Welfare, Assistant Deputy Minister, Executive Director and has been a Consultant with Savoury Consulting Ltd since 2013. George has been responsible for policy and program development/reviews and service delivery for areas such as Child Welfare and Residential Care, Prevention Services, Services for Persons with Disabilities, Social Assistance, Family Violence, Early Childhood Development and Youth Services.

He has led such projects as implementation of Nova Scotia and Bermuda's child welfare legislation, the integration of Children's Aid Societies into the provincial Department of Community Services in Nova Scotia, program reviews related to child and family services for Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services, Miawpukek First Nation, Conne River, Newfoundland and Labrador, Province of PEI, Mi'Kmaq Confederacy of PEI and New Brunswick. He has completed strategic plans, board governance manuals, human resources manuals, social media and housing policies for various organizations.

He has chaired a number of provincial and interdepartmental government committees such as Nova Scotia's Child and Youth Strategy, Child Death Review Committee and the Secure Care Residential Care Treatment Committee. George has been involved at the national level on various initiatives related to policy development and improving outcomes for children and families and has served on the executive of the Child Welfare League of Canada. He has presented at various conferences, workshops and Legislative Committees such as Public Accounts and Community Services on a range of child welfare matters. He has done media interviews on a wide range of child welfare issues.

Savoury Consulting Ltd. is a management/child welfare consulting business focused on helping leaders and organizations become more strategic and effective in achieving success. Savoury Consulting Ltd. has done work in Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador and Northwest Territories, as well as with many First Nations organizations. His projects have included program and policy reviews, strategic plan development and training in the following areas: strategic planning, board governance, respectful communication, respectful workplace-strategies for a healthy workplace, policy development, performance management, social media, resolving workplace conflict and team building. A specialty of Savoury Consulting Ltd is program reviews in child welfare. George has an MSW in social policy and administration. He has been awarded the Achievement of Excellence Award by the Nova Scotia Council for the Family and the National Children's Service Award by the Child Welfare League of Canada.

George is a member of the Nova Scotia College of Social Workers (Private Practice), Child Welfare League of Canada, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and Human Resources Association of Nova Scotia (Associate Member).

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CAREGIVER STRATEGY REVIEW - YUKON FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

FEBRUARY 15, 2022

FINAL REPORT

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SAVOURY CONSULTING LTD., www.savouryconsulting.com

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Savoury Consulting Ltd. was engaged in July 2021 to do a review of the Caregiver Strategy for Yukon's Family and Children's Services. Family and Children's Services is part of the Health and Social Services Department, Yukon, Canada. The primary focus of the review was on the recruitment, retention, training and supports for caregivers.

The Caregiver Strategy has four primary objectives:

1. Develop a comprehensive selection of places for children when they cannot remain at home due to child protection concerns,
2. Modernize the recruitment of all caregivers,
3. Enhance the retention and training of all caregivers and
4. Transform the antiquated foster care model into a community support model that emphasises and supports children remaining within extended families, communities and connected to their culture.

The Strategy is being undertaken with First Nations partners, and in particular, the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN). Recognizing the over representation of First Nations children in care, First Nations are taking the lead where possible and appropriate in the development of the strategy.

The coordination of prevention and supportive services to children and families can be challenging. When families come to the attention of child welfare there are often many unmet needs that are impacting the family. As a result of these unmet needs, multiple agencies often need to become involved to support the children and family. Often the community agencies or departments are simply unable to address the systemic issues facing families, even with excellent service coordination. These issues can include poverty, intimate partner violence, discrimination, lack of affordable quality child care, lack of educational, mental health and addictions services, inadequate housing and multi-generational trauma. These are needs which require a public health/community perspective, with child welfare being a key partner in the efforts to marshal the resources required to address them. Collaborative efforts involving community agencies and departments with the mandate to provide these services is essential and can be instrumental in children being able to grow and develop with their families in their own communities, instead of being placed outside their homes.

Children do best if they can be raised with their parent(s) as long as they are safe and protected. In those instances where foster care is needed, Yukon's Family and Children's Services believes in the importance of the extended family. The Extended Family Care Agreement (EFCA) Program is a key strategy to reduce the need for non-relative foster care and enabling children to remain with family in their community. "A robust and meaningful kin-first culture leads to the very best outcomes for children and families. Research shows, when out of home placement is deemed a needed intervention, placing a child with a relative lead to stronger family bonds between the parent and child, fewer placement disruptions, shorter lengths of stay, and reduces the impact of trauma" (Lunkenheimer et al, 2008, pp 1737-1752).

National-level reports, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's final report (Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future), the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the enactment of Canada's Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis Children, Youth and Families (FNIM), have resulted in significant changes in child welfare in Canada, particularly for First Nations, Inuit and Metis children, youth and families. The Yukon

government has made a number of significant changes as a result of these reports/initiatives and has partnered with Yukon First Nations, including the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN). One of the major collaborative initiatives intended to promote reunification with family, community and culture has been Honouring Connections, “Honouring Connections supports the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions’ Call to Action # 1, which calls for all levels of government to commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care. The Government of Yukon, Council of Yukon First Nations and Yukon First Nations government commit to working together to create a better future for Yukon children, youth, families and communities.” Press Release, Honouring Connections, December 12, 2019 P,1).

The five principles that are the foundation of the Touchstones of Hope are of critical importance to transforming the child welfare system. “The five principles are as follows: self-determination, holistic approach, culture and language, structural interventions and non-discrimination. Cindy Blackstock’s Reconciliation in Child Welfare: Touchstones of Hope for Indigenous Children, Youth, and Families embodies an earnest intent to capture the wisdom of the approximately 200 invited leaders who attended Reconciliation: Looking Back, Reaching Forward—Indigenous Peoples and Child Welfare on October 26, 27, and 28, 2005, in Niagara Falls, Canada. It is intended to serve as a foundation for the development of community-based action plans (p.5.). Analysis of the collective wisdom of the child welfare leaders who attended the Reconciliation: Looking Back, Reaching Forward event resulted in forming a concept of reconciliation that is comprised of four phases. Reconciliation engages both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in a process of:

- Truth Telling: The process of open exchange (listening and sharing) regarding child welfare’s past;
- Acknowledging: Affirming and learning from the past and embracing new possibilities for the future;
- Restoring: Addressing the problems of the past and creating a better path for the future, and;
- Relating: Having recognized that Indigenous peoples are in the best position to make decisions about Indigenous children and youth, we move forward together in a respectful way, along a new path, to achieve better outcomes for Indigenous children and youth”.

Source: Blackstock, Cindy, Cross, Terry, George, John, Brown, Ivan, Formsma, Jocelyn, Reconciliation in Child Welfare: Touchstones of Hope for Indigenous Children, Youth, and Families, <http://www.reconciliationmovement.org>.

The Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis children, youth and families (FNIM 2000) mandates the provision of preventive services for children and families and makes it clear that children should not be removed from their parents because of poverty. Yet we know that the majority of child protection cases are associated with child neglect. “Although out-of-home placements are often necessary to ensure a child’s wellbeing or safety, high rates of placements can be an indication of a lack of access to support services and socio-economic conditions that impact a family’s ability to meet their children’s needs.” (Trocmé, Nico, et al, 2009, p.1).

A 2019 report on Children in-Out-Of-Home Care in Canada estimated that the rate of children in out of home care in the Yukon per 1000 was 28.18 at the end of March 2019, whereas the rate per 1000 children in Canada was 8.16. Both of these numbers include children in kinship care or extended family care in terms of the Yukon rate per 1000 children. Excluding EFCA placements, the number per 1000 in the Yukon who were in out of home care in 2019 was 11.15, compared to 7.46 in Canada per 1000. (Saint-Girons, Marie et al, November, 2020, p 4.).

Such findings have been tied back to the continuous discrimination of Indigenous families through

colonial policies and practices and the persistent underfunding of prevention and other essential services on-reserve. This ultimately contributes to the disproportionate presence of chronic challenges, such as poverty and inadequate housing, that put First Nations, Métis, and Inuit families at increased risk of coming into contact with the child protection system. (Saint-Girons, Marie et al, 2020, p.6). This contact with the child protection system has generally led to placements for children in foster, group home and residential care, when child protection determined that the children should be removed from their families. Most often the placement is outside their family, neighbourhood/community resulting in disruption to their schooling and friendships.

In the report, *Skye's Legacy: A Sense on Belonging* (June 2021), "Skye, the Teetlit Gwich'in Band girl who was the subject of the investigative report by the British Columbia's Representative for Children and Youth (RCY), wasn't born until 2000, a few years after the last Canadian residential school closed its doors. But she, too, was removed from her mother, sister, extended family and culture as she became part of what many have described as the modern-day residential school – the child welfare system. What has become evident to the Representative in the wake of the widespread shock expressed over the Kamloops discovery is that, despite significant undertakings – most notably the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls – there remains a segment of the Canadian population still unaware of the extent of the damage that has been done, and continues to be inflicted, through colonialism". (*Skye's Legacy*, B.C RCY, June 2021,p.3).

One of the most significant preventive initiatives that the Yukon has undertaken has been the Extended Family Care program. This program ensures that children who require out-of-home care remain with relative caregivers compensated at the same level as foster parents. The Yukon was the first jurisdiction in Canada to match the funding for extended family caregivers to those provided to foster caregivers.

The recommendations of the Review of Yukon's Placement Decision-Making, which was completed by Savoury Consulting Ltd. In February 2021, contain a number of recommendations that are relevant to the development of the Caregiver Strategy. Recommendations in that report are related to policies, caseload/workload, clinical supervision, professional development, training and support for caregivers, adequacy of placement options, etc.

The results of this review revealed that the following are the key priorities that require action to strengthen the caregiver program: prevention of children from coming into care, recruitment, assessment and retention, training, support, compensation and relationship building with First Nations, caregiver association, transitional support for youth, staffing and professional development and review of legislation, programs and policies. Specific recommendations have been made for each of these key priorities.

The implementation of the 44 recommendations (Appendix 1) in this report, along with the initiatives taken over the past several years will further enable the Yukon to continue as a leader in supporting children, youth and families.

INTRODUCTION

Located in the northwest region of Canada, the Yukon is bordered by Alaska to the west, the Northwest Territories to the east, the Beaufort Sea to the north, and British Columbia to the south. Yukon covers 482,443 km², of which 474,391 km² is land and 8,052 km² is water, making it the forty-first largest subnational entity in the world, and among the fifty largest, the least populous.

According to the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, “the estimated population of the territory on June 2021 was 43,118. Yukon’s annual population (June 30th) increased by 7,659 from 35,459 in 2011 to 43,118 in 2021. The majority of the population (33, 893) resided in the Whitehorse area., followed by Dawson City (2,303, and Watson Lake area (1,503). Yukon’s Indigenous population, including those with status under the Indian Act and those who self-identified as First Nations, Métis or Inuit, amounted to 9,546 or 22.1 % of the total population. This represents an increase in the Indigenous population by 32 from 9,514 in 2020 to 9,546 in 2021. However, more than 70% of the children, youth and families involved in the child welfare system self-identify as First Nation, Métis or Inuit.

Approximately 5,582 (58.5%) of the Indigenous population resided in Whitehorse and 3,964 (41.5%) resided in rural communities. The median age for the Indigenous population was 33.5 years; for non-Indigenous, it was 40.7 years.” (Yukon Bureau of Statistics, Government of the Yukon, June 2020).

Child welfare services are mandated under Yukon's Child and Family Services Act (2010). The Act is progressive and has many of the features of Canada's Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis Children, Youth and Families. “The Child and Family Services Act (CFSA) Review Committee report was tabled on October 28, 2019 in the Legislative Assembly. The report, Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, contains 149 recommendations and is the culmination of months of public engagement throughout the territory by the six-member independent advisory committee. Mo Caley-Verdonk, Raymond Sydney, Doris Anderson, Debbie Hoffman, Lori Duncan and Rosemary Rowlands,” (Yukon New Release # 19-236, <https://yukon.ca/en/news/child-and-family-services-act-review-advisory-committee-report-tabled>).

The Act must be reviewed every five years (section 183) and the report titled, Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow that is noted above is the latest review of the Act. The Act at the outset, in its preamble, references the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

“The importance of children and young people’s safety and welfare is manifested in the development of a human rights instrument specifically for children and young people, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child provides a child-centered framework within which services to children are located. It spells out the basic human rights that all children have, including the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influence, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life. The four core principles of the convention are: non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child. The vision of children implicit in the CRC is that they are neither the property of their parents nor are they helpless objects of charity. Children are individuals, members of a family and a community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to their age and stage of development.” (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, September, 1990, <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/children-human-rights>). The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child can be used as a lens to review legislation and policy development in child welfare.

Section 165 of the Yukon CFSA as part of the responsibilities of the Minister in part 7, provides the authority related to facilities and services for children. Section 165 stipulates that “children who are in the care or custody of a director, that the Minister may establish, operate and provide residential facilities for one or more children including foster homes, group homes, residential centres or receiving homes.” (Yukon CFSA, s.165 (1).

The Yukon CFSA is very progressive in emphasizing the importance of placement with the child's

extended family, whenever possible. Section 10 of the Act, which deals with Family Support Services and Agreements, outlines the types of services that can be provided on a preventive basis to support children remaining with their families. The types of agreements that can be utilized for support services range from special needs, voluntary care, to agreements with extended family members or others and support services for youth, including transitional support services. The Act of course provides for various orders, when a child is in need of protective intervention and included among the various options is voluntary placement with extended family members or others under Section 36. Court orders for a child in need of protective intervention can range from placement with the child's parent or alternative placement (Section 52).

Section 89(2) spells out the same type of criteria, as is found in Canada's Act Respecting First Nations, Inuit and Metis Children, Youth and Families, when determining the placement for a child taken into the care or custody of the director. The following are the key placement provisions:

89 (1) A child in the care or custody of a director may only be placed by the director with a caregiver in a residential facility established by, or operated on behalf of the Minister under section 165.

(2) In determining the placement for the child as part of the case plan developed under section 44, priority shall be given to placing the child with a member of the child's extended family, or if that is not consistent with the best interests of the child, priority shall be given to placing the child as follows:

(a) in a location where the child can maintain contact with friends and members of the child's extended family; and

(b) in a location that will allow the child to continue in the same school.

(3) If the child is a member of a First Nation, in determining the placement for the child as part of the case plan developed under section 44, priority shall be given to placing the child as follows:

(a) with a member of the child's extended family;

(b) with a family that includes a person who is a member of the child's First Nation; or

(c) with a family that includes a person who is a member of another First Nation.

(4) If placement of the child who is a member of a First Nation in accordance with paragraphs (3)(a), (b) or (c) is not consistent with the best interests of the child, priority shall be given to placing the child in accordance with paragraphs (2)(a) and (b). S.Y. 2008, c.1, s.89.

The Yukon government is obligated to provide the Minister with the resources to enable the Minister and its employees to carry out the legislative provisions of the Act. The Act is not discretionary legislation. Child protection is no different than essential police or health care services.

The Department of Health and Social Services' (HSS), Family and Children's Services (FCS) branch provides child welfare services to Yukoners under the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA). (See Organizational Charts – (Appendix 2). Family and Children Services (FCS) is a branch within Health and Social Services, Yukon Government.

With the introduction of parity in financial compensation for extended family care providers in 2017, there has been a significant increase in the number of children requiring out of home placement who are supported in remaining with extended family. This enables children and youth to remain connected to their community and culture. Consequently, there has been a significant decrease in the number of children and youth placed in foster care and group care. As of August 2021, there was 75 EFCA Caregivers, compared to 42 FH Caregivers. The number of children in EFCA in August 2021 was 130 compared to 48 in Foster Home care.

The Yukon has focused considerable efforts on providing preventive services so children and youth can remain safely with their families. There are significant benefits to placing children with relatives when their birth parents cannot care for them. "In appropriate kinship placements, children can have greater

permanency and well-being compared to children in foster care (Metzger, 2008; Rubin, Downes, O'Reilly, Mekonnen, Luan, & Localio, 2008; Sakai, Lin, & Flores, 2011). For example, Zinn (2012) found that children placed with grandparents have low rates of placement disruption. Kinship caregivers usually live in close proximity to the children's biological parents and share the same sense of family and community. Also, with the proper supports, kin families are likely to be able to keep siblings together (Hegar & Rosenthal, 2009). Children in kinship care often report a greater attachment to the caregiver and the family (Hegar & Rosenthal, 2009). Children are usually familiar with the relative and are likely to have increased contact with their biological parents compared to being placed in foster care. They are also likely to experience greater stability and support in kinship care" (Billing, Ehrle, & Kortenkamp, 2002; Dubowitz, Feigelman, Harrington, Starr, Zuravin, & Sawyer, 1994; Sakai et al., 2011; Winokur, Crawford, Longobardi, & Valentine, 2008).

Several studies have examined the outcomes of children in kinship care compared to those in foster care." In one study, the children in kinship care had "good or better outcomes" (Winokur et al., 2008, p. 344). Using data from the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being, Sakai, Lin, and Flores (2011) found that children in kinship care often have better behavioral outcomes compared to those in foster care. Children in kinship care have higher scores on expressive functions and are less at risk for delays in motor development and neurocognitive development compared to those placed in foster care (Stacks & Partridge, 2011). Infants have also shown the positive effects of kinship placements compared to foster care including decreased risk factors and a shorter time in the placement (Stacks & Partridge, 2011). (Sutphin, Suzanne, GrandFamilies, Vol.2 (1) 2015, pp.51-52). "Keeping children with family also allows them to remain in the same school and community with consistent access to teachers, neighbors, extended kin, friends, faith groups, coaches, sports teams and others that can provide critical support for children's sound mental and emotional health." (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2014).

In the Yukon, if a child is in need of out-of-home care, the first choice is for the child to reside with their extended family. Supported and mandated through the CFSA, specifically s. 14, Extended Family Care Agreements (EFCAs) allow children who require out-of-home care to remain with extended family rather than come into the care and/or custody of the director. Extended family caregivers include people who are related to the child by blood, through a spousal relationship, or any other persons who have, or had, a parent-like relationship with the child.

The recommendations (Appendix 1 – List of Recommendations) to address the priorities are provided at the end of each of the following sections in this report:

1. Prevention of Children from Coming into Care
2. Recruitment, Assessment and Retention
3. Training, Support, Compensation and Relationship with First Nations
4. Caregiver Association
5. Transitional Support for Youth
6. Legislation, Policies and Program
7. Staffing and Professional Training and Development for Staff

The next section of this report describes the methodology used in completing this review, followed by the analysis and recommendations for the key priorities listed above. The final sections are the conclusion, appendices, consultant's profile and references.

METHODOLOGY

Savoury Consulting Ltd. was engaged to complete a review of the caregiver strategy, Family and Children's Services, Health and Social Services, Yukon, Canada, in July 2021, at which time the world was still dealing with COVID-19. Health and travel restrictions were in place so the methodology included a survey, zoom meetings, review of documents e.g., legislation, policies, procedures. Three days of meetings in Whitehorse with caregivers, staff and key stakeholders e.g., CYFN, Child and Youth Advocate took place from November 29 to December 1, 2021. With the exception of one session with staff, the 3 days and evenings of meetings in Whitehorse were solely utilized for sessions with caregivers.

The Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office also made a submission with recommendations. The report is included as Appendix 10.

Stage one involved the circulation of a staff survey with key questions related to the caregiver strategy (Appendix 3). Initial drafts were reviewed by Family and Children's Services and approved prior to circulation. The roles of staff who participated included managers, supervisors, social workers, and caregiver support workers. The survey was targeted to 20 staff, involved with the caregiver program. A total of 14 staff completed the survey.

During meetings with the caregivers in Whitehorse from November 29 to December 1, 2021, the focus of the discussions was on the aspects of the caregiver program that are working well and the areas that should be improved. Some of these sessions with caregivers were in small groups, while other caregivers attended individual sessions. Some caregivers were unable to attend in person and as a result participated using zoom technology. Posters were widely distributed inviting caregivers to join these sessions and all caregivers were given a phone call inviting them to participate in the sessions. Caregivers who were unable to participate in the Whitehorse sessions were given the opportunity to participate in conference calls in January, 2021. Feedback from the sessions is summarized throughout the report.

At the end of sessions with staff and caregivers, they were given the option of sending an email to Savoury Consulting regarding any additional concern(s) or suggestion(s) they felt should be considered.

Caregivers were also asked to complete a survey (Appendix 4). Drafts of the survey were reviewed by Family and Children's Services and the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) and their suggestions were incorporated in the survey. The survey was also reviewed by Communications Staff and further changes were made as a result of the feedback. The survey was sent to all caregivers by email and a reminder with the survey was also sent to caregivers during the week of January 9, 2021. Caregivers were asked if they preferred to complete the survey in hard copy format.

A total of 8 caregivers completed the survey. There may be several reasons for the low response to the survey by caregivers: caregivers who participated in the group or individual sessions or conference calls may feel that they had already provided their input on the program and some caregivers may have experienced difficulty accessing the email/survey electronically and may have been uncomfortable completing the survey electronically.

The surveys and focus group meetings with staff and caregivers provided excellent information for this review. The fact that staff and caregivers took the time from their busy schedules to participate in meetings

and respond to the survey questions is most appreciated. It also highlights the importance they place on the caregiver program and to making improvements to the program.

The results of the surveys are included in Appendices 3 and 4. Narrative feedback from the focus groups and the surveys have been summarized and are included throughout the report.

KEY PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

s.74(1)(a)

PREVENTION OF CHILDREN FROM COMING INTO CARE

s.74(1)(a)




RECOMMENDATIONS ON PREVENTION OF CHILDREN FROM COMING INTO CARE




RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT AND RETENTION

s.74(1)(a)




SUMMARY OF KEY PERSPECTIVES FROM STAFF REGARDING RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT AND RETENTION WERE AS FOLLOWS:

s.74(1)(a)



SUMMARY OF KEY PERSPECTIVES FROM CAREGIVERS REGARDING RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING WERE AS FOLLOWS:

s.74(1)(a)



RECOMMENDATIONS ON RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT AND RETENTION

s.74(1)(a)



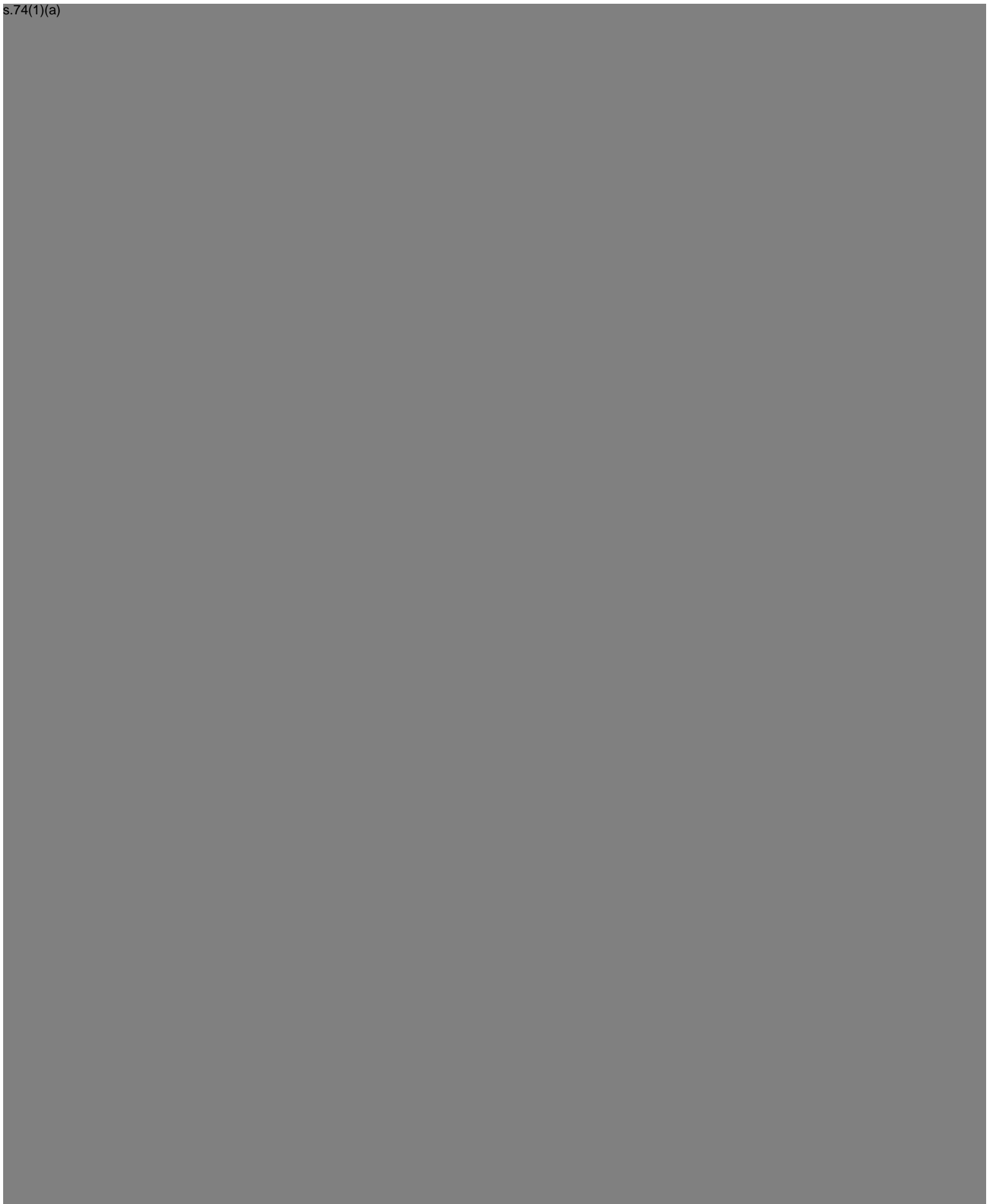


TRAINING, SUPPORT, COMPENSATION AND RELATIONSIP WITH FIRST NATIONS









**SUMMARY OF KEY PERSPECTIVES FROM STAFF REGARDING TRAINING, SUPPORT
COMPENSATION AND RELATIONSHIP WITH FIRST NATIONS WERE AS FOLLOWS:**

SUMMARY OF KEY PERSPECTIVES FROM CAREGIVERS REGARDING TRAINING, SUPPORT, COMPENSATION AND RELATIONSHIP WITH FIRST NATIONS WERE AS FOLLOWS:




**RECOMMEDATIONS ON TRAINING, COMPENSATION AND SUPPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS AND
RELATIONSHIP WITH FIRST NATIONS**



TRANSITIONAL SUPPORT FOR YOUTH




s.74(1)(a)




SUMMARY OF KEY PERSPECTIVES FROM STAFF REGARDING TRANSITIONAL SUPPORT FOR YOUTH WERE AS FOLLOWS:

s.74(1)(a)




SUMMARY OF KEY PERSPECTIVES FROM CAREGIVERS REGARDING TRANSITIONAL SUPPORT FOR YOUTH WERE AS FOLLOWS:

s.74(1)(a)




RECOMMENDATIONS ON TRANSITIONAL SUPPORT FOR YOUTH

s.74(1)(a)




CAREGIVER ASSOCIATION

s.74(1)(a)



s.74(1)(a)




**SUMMARY OF KEY PERSPECTIVES FROM STAFF REGARDING A CAREGIVER ASSOCIATION
WERE AS FOLLOWS:**

s.74(1)(a)




s.74(1)(a)




SUMMARY OF KEY PERSPECTIVES FROM CAREGIVERS REGARDING A CAREGIVER'S ASSOCIATION WERE AS FOLLOWS:

s.74(1)(a)




RECOMMENDATIONS ON CAREGIVER ASSOCIATION

s.74(1)(a)



LEGISLATION, POLICIES, PROGRAM AND STANDARDS

s.74(1)(a)



SUMMARY OF KEY PERSPECTIVES FROM STAFF REGARDING LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND PROGRAM WERE AS FOLLOWS:



RECOMMENDATION ON LEGISLATION, POLICIES, PROGRAM AND STANDARDS



STAFFING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR STAFF



SUMMARY OF KEY PERSPECTIVES FROM STAFF REGARDING STAFFING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WERE AS FOLLOWS:

SUMMARY OF KEY PERSPECTIVES FROM CAREGIVERS REGARDING STAFFING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WERE AS FOLLOWS:



RECOMMENDATIONS ON STAFFING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



CONCLUSION





APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - All of the Recommendations in This Report Are Listed Below

This Appendix is a re-cap of all of the recommendations that are included in the various sections of the report. They are provided in the order in which the various sections are covered in the report. Readers are encouraged to read the applicable section for the recommendations as it will provide the context for the recommendations below:

RECOMMENDATIONS ON PREVENTION OF CHILDREN FROM COMING INTO CARE

s.74(1)(a)




RECOMMENDATIONS ON RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT AND RETENTION




**RECOMMEDATIONS ON TRAINING, COMPENSATION AND SUPPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS AND
RELATIONSHIP WITH FIRST NATIONS**

s.74(1)(a)




RECOMMENDATIONS ON TRANSITIONAL SUPPORT FOR YOUTH

s.74(1)(a)



RECOMMENDATIONS ON CAREGIVER ASSOCIATION

s.74(1)(a)



RECOMMENDATION ON LEGISLATION, POLICIES, PROGRAM AND STANDARDS

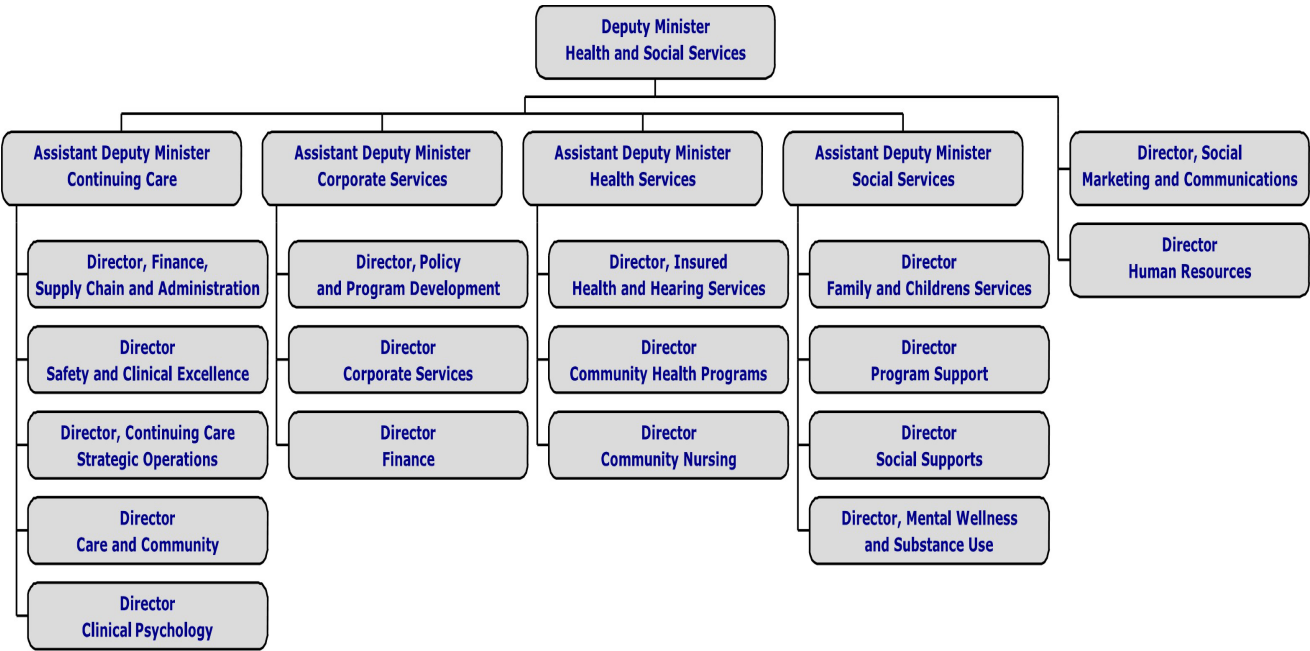


RECOMMENDATIONS ON STAFFING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



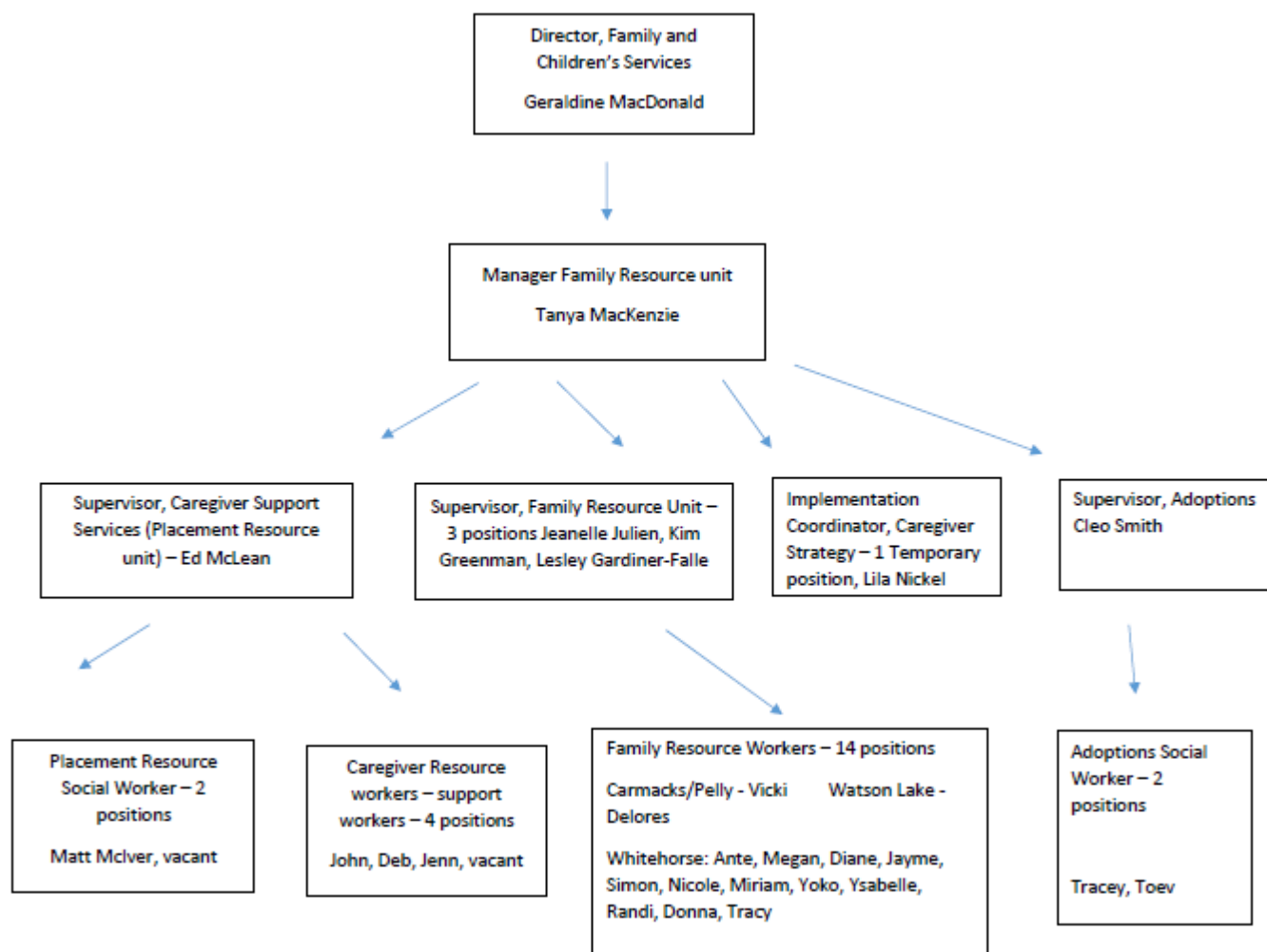
Appendix 2 - Organizational Charts

Yukon - Health and Social Services organizational structure:



April 2021

Yukon Family and Children's Services:



Created July 2021 – note that the names of each unit are in the process of being updated

Appendix 3 - Staff Survey with Results

Surveys were completed by 14 staff. The results are indicated below for each of the questions. Some of the questions were not completed, which may be due to the staff lacking the knowledge to answer the questions.

Roles of Staff Who Completed the Survey and Location:

Managers- 2

Caregiver Resource Workers – 2

Social Workers – 4

Support Program Coordinator/Supervisor- 2

Supervisor of Caregiver Resource Team – 1

Placement Resource Workers-2

Implementation Coordinator of the Caregiver Strategy -1

Locations

Whitehorse- 11

Dawson City-1

Faro-1

Old Crow/Pelly Crossing-1

1. The legislation, policies, programs and standards are clear and support the best possible placement for the child in the **extended family care agreement (EFCA)**.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 8 ☐ Neutral 6 ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

The legislation, policies, programs and standards are clear and support the best possible placement for the child in **community homes (foster care)** in their community.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 7 ☐ Neutral 6 ☐ Disagree 1 ☐ Strongly Disagree

2. The following supports are made available to the **extended family care program**:

Parenting Training

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neutral 4 ☐ Disagree 6 ☐ Strongly Disagree 4

Counselling including support regarding the impact of trauma related to residential schools and loss of children/grandchildren to the child welfare system

☐ Strongly Agree 1 ☐ Agree 2 ☐ Neutral 6 ☐ Disagree 3 ☐ Strongly Disagree 1

Respite

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 7 ☐ Neutral 3 ☐ Disagree 2 ☐ Strongly Disagree 2

Child/Day Care

☐ Strongly Agree 3 ☐ Agree 7 ☐ Neutral 4 ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Tutoring (Educational)

☐ Strongly Agree 1 ☐ Agree 9 ☐ Neutral 2 ☐ Disagree 2 ☐ Strongly Disagree

Importance of Belonging-Cultural, Identity, Relational, Physical and Legal

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 10 ☐ Neutral 3 ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Support/Funding for Cultural, Sports, Music and Arts

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 11 ☐ Neutral 2 ☐ Disagree 2 ☐ Strongly Disagree

Support Groups

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 3 ☐ Neutral 5 ☐ Disagree 4 ☐ Strongly Disagree 2

Suicide Awareness and Counselling

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 2 ☐ Neutral 6 ☐ Disagree 5 ☐ Strongly Disagree 1

Reunification Support

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 1 ☐ Neutral 7 ☐ Disagree 4 ☐ Strongly Disagree 1

Mental Health Counselling and Treatment

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 6 ☐ Neutral 6 ☐ Disagree 2 ☐ Strongly Disagree 1

Substance and Addictions Counselling and Treatment

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 6 ☐ Neutral 6 ☐ Disagree 2 ☐ Strongly Disagree

3. The following supports are made available to the **community homes (foster care)**:

Parenting Training

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 3 ☐ Neutral 4 ☐ Disagree 4 ☐ Strongly Disagree 2

Counselling including support regarding the impact of trauma related to residential schools and loss of children/grandchildren to the child welfare system

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 2 ☐ Neutral 7 ☐ Disagree 4 ☐ Strongly Disagree 1

Respite

☐ Strongly Agree 4 ☐ Agree 6 ☐ Neutral 4 ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Child/ Day Care

☐ Strongly Agree 5 ☐ Agree 5 ☐ Neutral 3 ☐ Disagree 1 ☐ Strongly Disagree

Tutoring (Educational)

☐ Strongly Agree 1 ☐ Agree 8 ☐ Neutral 5 ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Importance of Belonging-Cultural, Identity, Relational, Physical and Legal

and Support

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 6 ☐ Neutral 5 ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Support/Funding for Cultural, Sports, Music and Arts

☐ Strongly Agree 1 ☐ Agree 11 ☐ Neutral 2 ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Support Groups

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 2 ☐ Neutral 8 ☐ Disagree 2 ☐ Strongly Disagree 2

Suicide Prevention Information and Counselling

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 2 ☐ Neutral 8 ☐ Disagree 2 ☐ Strongly Disagree 1

Reunification Support

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 3 ☐ Neutral 6 ☐ Disagree 3 ☐ Strongly Disagree 1

Mental Health Counselling and Treatment

☐ Strongly Agree 1 ☐ Agree 6 ☐ Neutral 6 ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Substance and Addictions Counselling and Treatment

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 5 ☐ Neutral 6 ☐ Disagree 2 ☐ Strongly Disagree

4. The compensation made available to **extended family care families** is adequate.

☐ Strongly Agree 3 ☐ Agree 7 ☐ Neutral 1 ☐ Disagree 3 ☐ Strongly Disagree

5. The compensation made available to **community homes (foster care)** is adequate.

☐ Strongly Agree 2 ☐ Agree 6 ☐ Neutral 2 ☐ Disagree 3 ☐ Strongly Disagree 1

6. The mutual assessment and the child and family safety review process are adequate in the approval of **community homes (foster care)**.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 7 ☐ Neutral 5 ☐ Disagree 1 ☐ Strongly Disagree

If you answered Neutral, Disagree or Strongly Disagree to the above question, please comment on how it could be improved.

7. (a) The current process for the selection of **extended family care** is adequate.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 8 ☐ Neutral 3 ☐ Disagree 1 ☐ Strongly Disagree

If you answered Neutral, Disagree or Strongly Disagree, please explain how it should be improved:

(b) The current assessment tool(s) used to assess the needs of children and youth prior to them commencing to live with extended family care and community care homes (foster care) are adequate.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 3 ☐ Neutral 3 ☐ Disagree 8 ☐ Strongly Disagree

(c) Extended family caregivers and community care homes (foster care) are provided with essential information on the background and needs of the child at time of placement.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 6 ☐ Neutral 5 ☐ Disagree 3 ☐ Strongly Disagree

8. Consultation and communication with First Nations, where the child/parents/extended family are First Nations members are adequate.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 9 ☐ Neutral 2 ☐ Disagree 2 ☐ Strongly Disagree

If the answer to the above question is neutral, disagree or strongly disagree, please comment on how it could be improved.

9. The policies for the Extended Family Care Plan and Extended Family Care Agreement are adequate.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 5 ☐ Neutral 5 ☐ Disagree 3 ☐ Strongly Disagree

If the answer to the above question was neutral, disagree or strongly disagree, please comment on how either or both of them could be improved.

10. A caregiver association would be beneficial (e.g., strategic planning, co-delivery of training and support, crisis support, peer support, advocacy, etc.) to provide support to caregivers?

☐ Strongly Agree 7 ☐ Agree 6 ☐ Neutral 1 ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

11. Please comment on the benefits and/or pitfalls of a caregiver's association?

12. Please indicate whether the following areas are Addressed (Yes) or Not Addressed within the orientation and on-going training and support provided to EFCA's.

Addressed-Yes or Not Addressed - No

Understanding how trauma affects children, youth and family: ☐ Yes 4 ☐ No 8

Understanding the trauma of sexual abuse for children and youth: ☐ Yes 3 ☐ No 9

Expectation of extended family care parents and services
that may be required: ☐ Yes 7 ☐ No 5

Review of their own strengths and how they can use them to
support children/youth: ☐ Yes 3 ☐ No 9

Strengths of family and remaining within the family/community: ☐ Yes 8 ☐ No 3

Developing knowledge/skills in caring for a child who has
experienced trauma: ☐ Yes 1 ☐ No 11

Stages of child development and meeting their developmental
needs: ☐ Yes 1 ☐ No 11

Addressing developmental delays: ☐ Yes 4 ☐ No 8

Supporting children during crisis and seeking resources they
may require to address their needs: ☐ Yes 5 ☐ No 7

Understanding the roles and responsibilities of teamwork,
including participating in reviews, court involvement,
counselling sessions, medical services, school meetings
and child welfare team meetings as required: ☐ Yes 4 ☐ No 8

| | | |
|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Understanding the barriers to educational access and engagement for youth who have experienced trauma: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 11 |
| How to be advocates for children/youth to have access to high quality schooling and input into decisions affecting them: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 9 |
| Understanding and supporting relationships between children and families/extended family: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 7 |
| Protecting and nurturing children: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 5 |
| Recognizing issues specific to the stresses and dynamics of full-time parenting for the second time: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 9 |
| Actively participating in permanency/belonging discussions: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 7 |
| Attending to the relationships among family siblings and other children related to the family: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 6 |
| Resolving family conflict: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 9 |
| Understanding and managing the effects of chemical dependency, parental incarceration, and HIV/AIDS: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 11 |
| Addressing children's specific medical, educational, emotional and sexuality needs: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 5 |
| Accessing and addressing financial and resource issues: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 7 |
| Understanding grief and loss: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 9 |
| Understanding the importance of belonging to family and community: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 6 |
| Working with the child welfare system: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 7 |
| Importance of visitation and access: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 3 |
| Understanding and preventing sexual abuse: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 8 |
| Understanding Individual and family identity including, culture, Identity, language, and spirituality: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 9 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 3 |
| Understanding physical, mental and behavioral health: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 9 |
| Educational, social and legal issues: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 7 |

13. Please indicate whether the following areas are Addressed (Yes), or Not Addressed (No) within the orientation and on-going training and support provided to **community homes (foster care)**.
Yes - Addressed or No - Not addressed

Understanding how trauma affects children, youth and family: ☐ Yes 8 ☐ No 4

Understanding the trauma of sexual abuse for children and youth: ☐ Yes 7 ☐ No 5

Expectation of extended family care parents and services that may be required: ☐ Yes 7 ☐ No 5

Review their own strengths and how they can use them to support children/youth: ☐ Yes 8 ☐ No 4

Strengths of growing up within family/and community: ☐ Yes 8 ☐ No 4

Developing knowledge/skills in caring for a child who has experienced trauma: ☐ Yes 6 ☐ No 6

Stages of child development and meeting their developmental needs: ☐ Yes 5 ☐ No 6

Addressing developmental delays: ☐ Yes 4 ☐ No 8

Supporting children during crisis and seeking resources they may require to address their needs: ☐ Yes 8 ☐ No 4

Understanding the roles and responsibilities of teamwork, including participating in reviews, court involvement, counselling sessions, medical services, school meetings and child welfare team meetings as required: ☐ Yes 7 ☐ No 4

Understanding the barriers to educational access and engagement for youth who have experienced trauma: ☐ Yes 6 ☐ No 5

How to be advocates for children/youth to have access to high quality schooling and input into decisions affecting them: ☐ Yes 7 ☐ No 4

Understanding the child's parent and supporting relationships between children and families/extended family: ☐ Yes 8 ☐ No 3

Protecting and nurturing children: ☐ Yes 9 ☐ No 2

Recognizing issues specific to the stresses and dynamics of full-time parenting for the second time: ☐ Yes 8 ☐ No 2

Actively participating in permanency/belonging discussions: ☐ Yes 7 ☐ No 4

| | | |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Attending to relationships among family siblings and other children related to the family: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 4 |
| Resolving family conflict: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 8 |
| Understanding and managing the effects of chemical dependency, parental incarceration, and HIV/AIDS: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 9 |
| Addressing children's specific medical, educational, emotional and sexuality needs: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 4 |
| Accessing and addressing financial and resource issues: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 4 |
| Understanding grief and loss: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 5 |
| Understanding the importance of belonging to family and community: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 4 |
| Working with the child welfare system: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 2 |
| Importance of visitation and access: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 9 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 1 |
| Understanding and preventing sexual abuse: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 2 |
| Understanding individual and family identity including, culture, language, and spirituality: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 2 |
| Understanding physical, mental and behavioral health: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 3 |
| Educational, social and legal issues: | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> No 2 |

14. At this time, educational support for extended family care providers is provided through one-on-one consultation between the worker and the family. Please elaborate on whether additional educational/training support, should be provided to EFCA families and how and by whom it should be delivered.

15. Cultural planning for children is being met through the extended family care program so that children's sense of belonging - identity, relational, cultural, physical and legal- is valued and promoted within the extended family care program.

☐ Strongly Agree 2 ☐ Agree 6 ☐ Neutral 4 ☐ Disagree 2 ☐ Strongly Disagree

16. Cultural planning for children is being met through community homes (foster care) so that children's sense of belonging - identity, relational, cultural, physical and legal- is valued and promoted within the program.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree 5 ☐ Neutral 7 ☐ Disagree 2 ☐ Strongly Disagree

17. Please indicate whether the following supports are Addressed (Yes) or Not Addressed (N0) as part of the transitional support to youth:

Yes- Addressed or No-Not addressed:

Counselling to resolve issues a youth may be experiencing: ☐ Yes 8 ☐ No 3

Knowledge/skills for community living: ☐ Yes 10 ☐ No 2

Educational training supports: ☐ Yes 10 ☐ No 2

Facilitating connections to appropriate educational, cultural and community resources: ☐ Yes 11 ☐ No 1

Funding for tuition, housing, school supplies, transportation, visits home during school breaks, etc.: ☐ Yes 12 ☐ No 0

18. What are the gaps or issues in the current policies, standards or practices?

For the extended family care program:

For the **community homes (foster care)**, if different from the above:

19. What are your thoughts including suggestions for specialized levels of care within communities to care for children/youth with special needs?

20. Please respond to the following questions:

How can the **extended family care program** could be improved?

How can the **community homes (foster care)** program could be improved?

21. What do you see as the strengths and opportunities of the?
Extended family care program?

Community homes (foster care) program?

Please indicate your role and work location below:

Role:

(Please specify e.g., social worker, Supervisor, etc.)

Office Location:

The information provided in this survey will be held in the strictest confidence by Savoury Consulting Ltd. The Department of Health and Social Services considers the information provided in this survey as confidential, to be maintained by Savoury Consulting Ltd only and agrees that the information provided in this survey or any emails associated with this survey will not be accessed by any employee of the Department. The findings from the surveys will be summarized and by providing comments on this survey, I consent to any of them being included in the final report, without identifying information as a summary of narrative feedback.

Please forward your completed survey to georgesavoury@gmail.com

Thank you for completing this survey.

Savoury Consulting Ltd.
www.savouryconsulting.com
902 717 2498

September 8, 2021

Appendix 4 - Caregiver Survey with Results

Caregiver Survey: Extended Family Care Agreement (EFCA) Homes and Foster Homes

Yukon Caregiver Survey

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the statements below using the check boxes. We also invite you to share your thoughts in the space provided.

1. I was provided with the information I needed to prepare me for caring for the child (or children) placed in my home. (Information such as: supervision required by the child; the child's cultural identity; behavioral issues; health and educational needs.)

Strongly
Agree

Agree 5

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly 2
Disagree

2. The recruitment process that led to my decision to become a caregiver or foster parent was appropriate.

Strongly
Agree

Agree 2

Neutral 4

Disagree 1

Strongly 1
Disagree

How could the recruitment process be improved?

3. My working relationship with my social worker, including ongoing communication, is adequate.

Strongly
Agree

Agree 7

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly 1
Disagree

How could the working relationship be improved?

4. The training and support I received was adequate.

Strongly
Agree

Agree 3

Neutral 2

Disagree

Strongly 3
Disagree

How could the training and support be improved?

5. The training and support enabled me to support the child's identity as a member of their First Nations family and community.

Strongly
Agree

Agree

Neutral **3**

Disagree 3

Strongly **2**
Disagree

How could it be improved?

6. This training and support included ways children can be supported in remaining connected to their First Nations or Indigenous culture (history, language, customs and traditions).

Strongly
Agree

Agree

Neutral **3**

Disagree **3**

Strongly **1**
Disagree

7. My social worker helped me build relationships with the child's First Nations or Indigenous community, which helped enable participation in cultural events and activities.

Strongly
Agree

Agree

Neutral **3**

Disagree **2**

Strongly **3**
Disagree

8. After the child was placed in my home, I received follow-up information about access to support such as elder support and guidance, culturally based healing, trauma counselling, and peer support.

Strongly
Agree

Agree **1**

Neutral **2**

Disagree **1**

Strongly **4**
Disagree

How could this be improved?

9. I was able to provide input about the child's education, mental health needs, and transition plans.

Strongly
Agree **2**

Agree **3**

Neutral **2**

Disagree **1**

Strongly
Disagree

How could this be improved?

10. I can get support outside regular working hours.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree 3 | Neutral 3 | Disagree 2 | Strongly Disagree |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------------|

How could this be improved?

11. The financial support I receive for the child in my care is adequate.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree 2 | Neutral 2 | Disagree 3 | Strongly 1 Disagree |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|

How could this be improved?

12. My social worker helped me access community services such as education, child care, mental health, and recreation.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree 4 | Neutral 3 | Disagree 1 | Strongly Disagree |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------------|

13. Caregivers are respected, recognized and appreciated for the role we play in caring for children and youth.

| | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------|----------|-------------------------------|
| Strongly Agree | Agree 3 | Neutral 4 | Disagree | Strongly 1 Disagree |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------|----------|-------------------------------|

How could this be improved?

14. A Caregiver Association in Yukon would be beneficial. (To assist with things such as strategic planning, co-delivery of training and support, crisis support, peer support, advocacy, etc.)

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------|---------|----------|----------------------|
| Strongly Agree 6 | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|----------------------------|-------|---------|----------|----------------------|

Please answer the following question if you were a caregiver to a youth who transitioned out of care.

- 15.** The youth in my care was provided with adequate support, including: financial support, housing support, access to culturally appropriate services, life skills, relationship building with workers, caregivers and family, trauma informed mental health and addictions services, education and career counselling, peer support, access to health and well-being services and information on rights.

Strongly
Agree

Agree **1**

Neutral **2**

Disagree

Strongly
Disagree

How could this be improved?

Please answer the following two questions if you are an EFCA Caregiver.

- 16.** What is working well for you as an EFCA Caregiver?
- 17.** How could you be better supported as an EFCA Caregiver?

Please answer the following two questions if you are a Foster Parent.

- 18.** What is working well for you as a Foster Parent?
- 19.** How could you be better supported as a Foster Parent?
- 20.** Additional comments:

Thank you for completing this survey. Your input will help Yukon Family and Children's Services find ways to better support the needs of Yukon children, youth and families.

Please forward your completed survey to:

georgesavoury@gmail.com

Savoury Consulting Ltd.

Appendix 5 - Schools Plus Information Sharing Guidelines

Website: [schoolsplus_information_sharing_guidelines.pdf \(ednet.ns.ca\)](https://schoolsplus.ednet.ns.ca/schoolsplus_information_sharing_guidelines.pdf)

Appendix 6 - Components of a Shared Parenting Policy

Components of a Shared Parenting Policy: Some Considerations

Although there is no “one size fits all” template for shared parenting, policy can provide a useful framework to guide development of a child-centered relationship between foster caregivers and birth families. Jurisdictions interested in adopting a shared parenting policy may want to consider including the following components, partly adapted from policy in North Carolina:

- A. Purpose and strengths of shared parenting
- B. Pre-meeting phone call
- C. Initial shared parenting meeting:
 - a. Preparation
 - i. focus on the child
 - ii. timing, location
 - iii. involvement of extended family members
 - iv. involvement of non-custodial parents: safety concerns
 - v. confidentiality
 - b. Role of caseworker
 - i. communicates purpose and structure of meeting
 - ii. monitor birth family/foster parent interaction
 - iii. serve as resource for all parties
 - c. Conduct of the meeting
 - i. ground rules
 - ii. content of discussion
 - 1. child’s preferences, routines, school progress, response to discipline, etc.
 - 2. cultural, religious practices and beliefs
 - 3. ongoing visitation and contact
 - d. Subsequent birth parent/foster parent contact, such as:
 - i. regular phone calls
 - ii. participation in team meetings, school meetings, medical appointments
 - iii. foster parent shares information, e.g., journal, lifebook, photos, schoolwork, with birth parent
 - e. Shared parenting and Child and Family Team Meetings: similarities and differences
 - f. Maintaining relationships post-permanency, as determined by parties

Source: CHAMPS Policy Playbook, 2 nd Edition, p. 14, www.fosteringchamps.org

Appendix 7 - Terms of Reference for Support Meetings with Caregivers in the Yukon -Draft

Terms of Reference

Purpose:

To strengthen and build a network of collaborative relationships between caregivers, Yukon's Family and Children's and CYFN's.

Membership:

- Co-Chairs: Meetings should be chaired by a staff member from Yukon's Family and Children's Services, a Caregiver and a staff member from CYFN
- Staff reps from the CYFN's
- Caregivers in the area
- Caregivers Social Workers and Supervisors

Objectives/Strategies:

1. To discuss caregiver's issues and possible solutions
2. To improve communication.
3. To provide updates on legislation, policies and training

Meetings:

This group will meet three times a year: September, December, & June

Terms of Reference:

Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually at the meeting in June.



CYFN's Family Preservation Services

Family Preservation Services is a department of the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN) that focuses on providing support to Yukon First Nations and Indigenous families. The Family Preservation team is available to help you navigate Yukon Government's complex Family and Children's Services system and support you in times of need.

We recognize that Yukon First Nations and Indigenous families, extended families and communities are in the best position to make decisions about their children and youth. Alongside Yukon First Nations and Indigenous parents, families, children and youth, CYFN's Family Preservation Services team will work with you in a respectful way, building on your strengths to achieve your goals.

Client Services:

Our friendly team is here to help and support you. Our Family Preservation Case Workers and Family Support Workers can help you in various ways, whether you require support for visitation and access, at meetings or court, or finding housing or transportation. Do not hesitate to reach out!

Cultural Programming:

Connection to family, community and culture is fundamental for Yukon First Nations and Indigenous families and children and youth in care. Our programming can help guide and support you in making these important connections. Our Family Preservation Programming team hosts cultural programming year-round, including: traditional medicine making, drum making, ice fishing, salmon smoking, tanning and canning, tufting, painting, and dry meat making. We also organize summer and harvest family camps. These events are instructed by Yukon First Nations knowledge keepers and Elders. If you know children and youth in care who would like

to participate in these monthly Cultural Connections events, reach out and come join the fun!



Mary Billy Smith and grandson Greg Smith



Call us at **867-393-9200**

or **1-833-364-0509**

Or email us at **family.preservation@cyfn.net**

Appendix 9 - Exit Interview



Foster Parent Exit
Interview Survey -Yu

Appendix 10 - Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Submission



Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office
Unit 19 – 2070 2nd Ave. Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, Y1A 1B1
Phone: 867-456-5575 ; Email: annette.king@ycao.ca
"Young People Have A Voice!"

February 2, 2022

George R. Savoury, MSW, RSW
Savoury Consulting Ltd.
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada
Telephone: (902) 717-2498 or email
georgesavoury@gmail.com

Re: YCAO Submission to Caregiver Review

Dear Mr. Savoury,

In follow up to our meeting in person on November 29, 2021, this letter summarizes the views and experiences of the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office (YCAO) concerning caregivers for children who live away from their parents.

About the Caregiver Review:

We are pleased that Family and Children's Services has contracted this caregiver review as part of a caregiver strategy. YCAO highlighted our systemic concerns in April 2019 as part of our submission for the Review of the *Child and Family Services Act* and in March 2020 as part of a report to Health and Social Services summarizing the systemic issues for children living in caregiver homes. Our hope is that this caregiver review will a) look at the legislation, policies, and practices related to caregivers; b) support recruitment and retention of caregivers; c) consider the rights of children who are residing in caregiver homes d) recognize the impacts on next generations when taking action to reconcile the harms of residential school. Any changes to policies and practices must be about promoting the best possible experience for children and youth and ensuring their best interests are paramount in all decisions about their placement. **(Article 3 UNCRC).**

Our definition of caregivers for this report includes various situations where children are living away from their biological parents. This is usually a formal extended family caregiver arrangement or government placed foster home but also includes informal arrangements with family members and formal arrangements with adoptive families. It does not include group home caregivers. For views on group home caregivers, please see *Empty Spaces Caring Connection: A Review of Experiences in Yukon Group Care* at www.ycao.ca.

Children have a right to have their living situation reviewed. Being placed with family usually ensures cultural continuity and connection to family, but there still needs to be a regular review of the living situation to ensure the child is in an environment that is safe, and promotes healthy development. All children who cannot live with their parents are entitled to a periodic review of their care. **(Article 25 UNCRC).**

YCAO context

The YCAO is an independent office of the Legislative assembly. The actions of the YCAO are directed by *Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Act*, guided by the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child*, and influenced by the UNDRIP and TRC.

The YCAO promotes the rights and interests of young people eligible to receive services from the Yukon Government, a school board or a First Nation service authority. YCAO is a member of the Canadian Council of Child and Youth Advocates.

The primary role of YCAO is Individual Advocacy. In addition, YCAO provides public education and systemic advocacy. YCAO assists young people in accessing government service and have their views heard and rights considered in the decision making of government service providers. YCAO provides information about the role of the Advocate and children's rights. YCAO provides information and guidance to governments to support them in fulfilling their obligation to uphold children's rights. YCAO may review and provide advice regarding systemic or policy issues that arise in the course of individual advocacy and raise a substantial amount of public interest. The Legislative Assembly or a Minister may refer relevant matters to YCAO for review.

YCAO receives numerous calls from caregivers concerned about children. Caregivers and family members are the primary source of referrals. Most of the advocacy we provide is for Indigenous children and youth receiving services within Family and Children's Services. From 2010 to 2021, we have provided individual advocacy for **171 children with 226 advocacy issues** who have been involved with an EFCA. From 2019 to 2021, we have provided individual advocacy issues for **30 children with 38 advocacy issues (Appendix A: Infographic).**

Youth Voice

When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account. **(Article 12 UNCRC).** Yukon children and youth have expressed the following:

- *"I want to live with my auntie or my grandpa"*
- *"I don't want to live in a foster home"*
- *"If I can't live with my mom, I want to live with family...but not my grandma"*
- *"I want to be in my community"*
- *"No one in my community is safe for me"*
- *"I am worried about my sister"*
- *"I wish my mom and dad were still together"*

- *"I want a safe place to stay when they are drinking"*
- *"I need clothes for school"*
- *"I want to go home to my mom"*
- *"I have been here my whole life I don't want to go anywhere else"*
- *"I want to live with Grandma and see Dad once in a while"*
- *"I pay for most of the stuff in the house. I need some money because I don't think it's fair" (age 14)*
- *"I want the parents that take care of me to make the decisions for me"*
- *"I want to live with my Uncle" (after being in care)*
- *"I want my mom to be my foster parent"*
- *"I want to see my mom but there is a no contact order"*
- *"I don't like the way the social worker talked to me"*
- *"I want to know my rights"*
- *"I don't want my aunt to know that I spoke to Advocate because she is close to my mother and might tell her that I don't want to live there"*
- *"I want to live with my mom and sister".*
- *"The bedroom at my auntie's is scary"*
- *"I can't live with my grandmother anymore. I want to go to Whitehorse. A group home would be ok". I need to go to school"*
- *"I am not going back to that place (grandma)" I need help".*
- *"I want to be out of the custody of the government"*
- *"I would like to move forward with adoption"*
- *"I want to live in town. It's boring staying with my grandfather".*
- *"I just found out that my Aunt that I live with is not actually my Aunt but I am going to keep calling her my Aunt, why not".*
- *"I pay for most of the stuff in the house. I need some money. I don't think it's fair that I pay"*
- *"I have attended six schools" (grade 5)*
- *"I don't know who my social worker is"*
- *"I need my ID". I need someone to sign a form for me".*
- *"I want a safe place when they are drinking"*
- *"I want to go back to my old school"*
- *"I feel sick"*
- *"I want to move back to my mom; I was only supposed to live with my grandmother for two years".*
- *"I want a safe home so I can do well in school"*
- *"I don't want to live with my grandma, I don't feel emotionally safe with her"*
- *"I want to live on my own. I need financial help though".*

Supports for Caregivers

Caregivers need supports to care for children who have experienced trauma and who are required to live away from their parents. Although we have heard from several families about needs for additional financial

support, they have also identified practical supports such as assistance with navigating biological family relationships, therapeutic supports, access to services, coordination of care, and assistance with getting children to programs and services, including school. Children need placements that provide safety, belonging and stability. Children have a right to special care and support if they cannot live with their parents **(Article 20 UNCRC)**.

Healing and Therapeutic Supports/Impacts of Residential School

Reconciliation includes providing adequate resources to enable Aboriginal communities and child-welfare organizations to keep Aboriginal families together where it is safe to do so, and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments, regardless of where they reside. **(Truth and Reconciliation Commission – Calls to Action (TRC 1.ii)**. Applying a child rights lens to all actions and decisions is one step toward reconciliation. **(Appendix B - Editorial September 30, 2021)**.

Children need a sense of belonging and cultural connection to family and community. Whose responsibility is it to reconcile the intergenerational harm of residential schools and sixties scoop? Caregivers can find it difficult to deal with these impacts when they are taking on their relative's children. Family relationships may be broken and complex. Foster parents find it difficult to be regularly told that they need to learn their place and not interfere with the social worker's role. Children are often re-traumatized with multiple moves, a lack of communication and a lack of continuity of care. This affects their attachment, belonging and identity. Children who have been maltreated are entitled to physical and psychological recovery and treatment **(UNCRC Article 39)**.

Without adequate practical and therapeutic supports, extended family care arrangements place the burden of harm on the surviving family members, often ageing grandparents. Many Indigenous families are carrying grief and loss. When added grief or trauma happens to caregiver homes, supports should not be pulled back but added. We have observed children being removed from caregiver homes during these times, adding to the children's trauma. Pulling back supports creates additional harm to the children; they should never be made to feel like they are burdens, financial or otherwise.

There needs to be training and mentoring supports for caregivers to understand the children they are caring for. Training should include FASD, attachment, child development, trauma, and support in managing big feelings. To date, foster parents receive training and supports that extended family caregivers do not. Allocation of resources and supports to biological parents and extended families will help the child thrive in an environment where they belong.

Caregivers are expected to balance caring for the children and supporting the parent, often their family member, doing this on our own is a lot. They are expected to just know what to do and it is intimidating to ask for help. Caregivers have been told directly that they if they cannot cope, the children can be moved. A variety of supports should be offered, including regular gatherings or a caregiver network.

Caregivers need supports and training to learn about how to talk to the children about the biological parents considering how their actions and words directly or indirectly impact the children they are caring for, i.e. How to talk to children about parents missing a visit. How do you deal with family trauma when

you are taking on your relative's children? How do you explain all these challenges to the children, especially if they want to go back to their parents? What supports are available to the kids and the caregivers and the family?

First Nations Partnerships

There is an ongoing over-representation of Indigenous children accessing services within Family and Children's Services and living in out of home care. First Nations governments need to have stronger partnerships in decision-making, participation in collaborative processes, and be a resource in providing traditional knowledge and cultural connection to children and families. Who is teaching these cultural teachings and beliefs that build a strong sense of belonging and connection? This needs to come from First Nations and can be supported by the territorial government. Children have rights to enjoy their own culture, practice their own religion, use their own language, and Indigenous children need special protection of this right (**UNCRC Article 30**)

Recognizing in particular the right of Indigenous families and communities to retain shared responsibility for the upbringing, training, education and well-being of their children, consistent with the rights of the child.

Article 17.2 - States shall in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous people take specific measures to protect Indigenous children from economic exploitation; Article 18 - Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions; Article 21 right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions. States shall take effective measures and, where appropriate. **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)**

Legal Guardianship

YCAO consistently hears from caregivers that it can be challenging to have full care of a child without legal decision-making authority. At times, this can mean that a child will not have access to services that require a legal guardian signature. YCAO also consistently hears from caregivers that they do not want guardianship of children because they need the ongoing practical support and financial assistance for caring for children. This includes supports with case planning and cooperative processes in working with family. Some families do not want to seek guardianship because they do not want to interfere with the relationship between the children and parents.

Recommendations:

1. Determine legislation and policy amendments that promote a child rights lens and consider the short term and long term impacts on children and youth. Apply a formal Child Rights Impact Assessment to proposed legislative amendments to the Child and Family Services Act.
2. Work with Yukon First Nations governments to determine culturally appropriate approaches to identifying appropriate caregivers and providing adequate supports (financial, practical, cultural, developmental, therapeutic, etc.)
3. Develop a caregiver network that provides resources, training, mentoring and supports that caregivers can safely access without fear of having children removed from their care.
4. Engage young people in placement planning, case planning, reviewing care arrangements, and determining necessary supports and resources.

We look forward to learning more about the caregiver strategy as it develops.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Annette King". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Annette King
Yukon Child and Youth Advocate

Appendix A: EFCA Infographic

Appendix B: Editorial

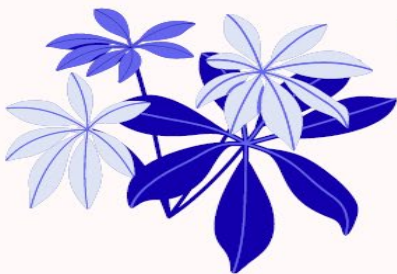
EXTENDED FAMILY CARE AGREEMENTS

**171 Children
with 226
Issues**

Protection & Safety

Permanency Planning

Family Connection



Family Supports

Transitions

November 2021

YUKON CHILD & YOUTH ADVOCATE OFFICE 1

EXTENDED FAMILY CARE AGREEMENTS

"I have been here
my whole life, I
don't want to go
anywhere else"

"I want to live
with my auntie
or grandpa"

Article 20

You have the right to special care and help if you cannot live with your parents. This includes making sure the child is provided with alternative care that is continuous and respects the child's culture, language and religion.

"I want a safe
place to stay
when they are
drinking"

CONSULTANT PROFILE

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Savoury Consulting Ltd. is a management/child welfare consulting business focused on helping leaders and organizations become more strategic and effective in achieving success. Savoury Consulting Ltd. has done consulting work in Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Yukon and Northwest Territories, as well as with many First Nations organizations. His projects have included program and policy reviews, strategic plan development and training in the following areas: strategic planning, board governance, respectful communication, respectful workplace-strategies for a healthy workplace, policy development, performance management, social media, resolving workplace conflict and team building. A specialty of Savoury Consulting Ltd, which started in 2013, is program reviews in child welfare.

George Savoury has extensive public service experience. He has held positions such as Social Worker, Supervisor, District Manager, Regional Administrator, Director of Child Welfare, Assistant Deputy Minister and Executive Director. As a public servant, George was responsible for policy and program development/reviews and service delivery for areas such as Child Welfare and Residential Care, Prevention Services, Services for Persons with Disabilities, Family Violence, Early Childhood Development and Youth Services.

George has an MSW in social policy and administration. He has been awarded the Achievement of Excellence Award by the Nova Scotia Council for the Family and the National Children's Service Award by the Child Welfare League of Canada.

George is a member of the Nova Scotia College of Social Workers (Private Practice), Child Welfare League of Canada, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and Human Resources Association of Nova Scotia (Associate Member).

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